



CITY OF LONDON ACADEMY
ISLINGTON



Teaching and Learning Handbook

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1. Introduction

The COLAI Teaching and Learning Handbook is designed to guide all teaching staff and teaching assistants in delivering high-quality, consistent, and impactful education across our school. It serves as a practical reference point for planning lessons, designing curriculum, delivering interventions, and evaluating teaching practice.

Grounded in the COLAI values of **integrity**, **respect**, and **responsibility**, the handbook supports our shared commitment to excellence in every classroom. We are an ambitious, highly structured, and supportive school that believes in the transformative power of education to change lives. Our school motto – *Where Students Succeed* – reflects this mission.

As noted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):

“The best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment.”

This handbook reflects that belief. It brings together our expectations, evidence-informed practices, and key principles that underpin great teaching and learning. It is a tool to support professional judgment, promote reflection, and build shared understanding. All staff are encouraged to use it regularly as a foundation for planning, improvement, and collaboration.

2. Teaching and Learning Vision and Principles

At our school, we believe that every student is capable of success. We are committed to ensuring that all learners, regardless of background or starting point, can achieve an excellent suite of academic qualifications, whether they are studying GCSE, BTEC, or A Level subjects. These qualifications are not an end in themselves, but a gateway to opportunity, choice, and long-term success.

We recognise that some of our students face significant barriers outside of school, but we never allow those barriers to become limits on our expectations. In line with our values of integrity, respect, and responsibility, we refuse to allow disadvantage to become a barrier to aspiration. Instead, we work collectively to remove obstacles, raise ambition, and ensure that all students have the structure, knowledge, and encouragement they need to thrive.

Our belief in the transformative power of education is at the heart of everything we do. We know, supported by evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation, that great teaching is the most powerful lever for improving outcomes. That’s why our teaching and learning strategy is rooted in maximising learning time and ensuring every moment in the classroom is purposeful and demanding.

What does great teaching look like in our school?

Great teaching in our school is:

- **Explicit:** Knowledge and skills are clearly and deliberately taught using direct instruction.
- **Inclusive:** All students, including those with SEND and EAL, are supported to access and master the curriculum.
- **Engaging:** High-thinking-ratio strategies ensure every student is actively involved in learning.
- **Consistent:** Lessons follow a predictable, structured format so that routines support, rather than distract from, thinking and progress.

We use a consistent instructional model (*I Do, We Do, You Do*) to build independence, fluency, and confidence. Lessons are calm, tightly focused, and built on the principle that all students are capable of thinking hard and succeeding when supported through effective routines and strong teacher direction.

Learning Habits: High Expectations in Action

Core to our approach is the use of Learning Habits—a set of evidence-informed, high-leverage strategies designed to increase cognitive engagement and ensure that every student is thinking, participating, and learning throughout the lesson. These include:

- STAR (Sit up straight, Track the speaker, Arms folded on the desk, Ready to contribute),
- Checking for listening,
- Whole-class ruler reading,
- Turn and talk,
- Use of mini whiteboards,
- Cold calling, and
- Choral response and repetition.

These habits are embedded across all classrooms and subjects. They create a consistent learning culture and signal our shared belief that thinking hard is essential to learning well.

We are proudly inclusive. Our curriculum and classroom practices are designed to ensure that students of all abilities and backgrounds are challenged, supported, and valued. Our provision for SEND and EAL learners is proactive, tailored, and highly regarded.

Every member of staff is a key part of this mission. Through consistent routines, high expectations, and shared practice, we build a school *where students succeed*, and where teachers change lives.

3. The Teaching and Learning Framework

3.1 Overview of our teaching approach

Our approach to teaching and learning is built around **The COLAI Lesson** – a consistent, evidence-informed lesson structure that ensures all students are taught clearly, challenged appropriately, and supported to succeed. This structure has been designed to reduce cognitive load, promote retrieval and mastery, and make excellent teaching practices habitual across the school.

The COLAI Lesson provides the architecture of every lesson. However, architecture alone does not create great learning. For our teaching to be transformative, we must also attend to how students think, respond, and participate. That is where our **Learning Habits** come in.

Learning Habits: The 'How' of Great Lessons

From September 2025, we will embed a set of core Learning Habits into every lesson. These are high-leverage strategies that ensure all students are actively thinking, fully participating, and building the resilience needed to learn well.

They are not a separate initiative or an 'extra layer'. Instead, they are the engine room of the COLAI lesson: they are the behaviours and routines that make the structure come to life.

At COLAI, we do not just teach students *what* to learn — we teach them *how* to learn.

Our Learning Habits include:

- STAR
- Checking for listening
- Whole-class ruler reading
- Turn and talk
- Mini whiteboard use
- Cold calling
- Choral response and repetition

Each of these habits supports a high **thinking ratio**, ensuring all students are engaged, not just a vocal few. Used consistently, these habits promote a culture where effort, focus and contribution are the norm.

3.2 The COLAI Lesson: Our Agreed Lesson Structure

At COLAI, we recognise that great teaching is not just about individual talent – it’s about consistent, deliberate, and high-quality practice across every classroom. To support this, we have a clear and agreed whole-school lesson structure: **The COLAI Lesson**.

The COLAI Lesson ensures that every student, in every subject, benefits from a consistent and effective learning experience. It provides the shared language, routines, and structure needed to reduce cognitive load, maximise learning time, and build a calm, focused learning culture.

Our goal is for students to experience high-quality teaching, lesson after lesson, day after day.

This structure has been developed in line with evidence-informed practice and the specific needs of our learners. It is not intended to limit creativity or autonomy, but to ensure that key elements of effective instruction are consistently in place across the school.

The COLAI Lesson is a non-negotiable framework. All teaching staff are expected to plan and deliver lessons using this structure. It supports our vision of a highly-structured, inclusive, and academically ambitious environment—*where students succeed*.

On the following pages, you will find a summary of the COLAI Lesson, including expectations for each phase: before the lesson, entry routine, the main teaching phases (*I Do, We Do, You Do*), and the exit routine. A detailed breakdown can be found in **Appendix 1**.

The COLAI Lesson – a summary

What is the structure of a COLAI lesson?

Before the lesson

- Seating plan is in place and saved on Bromcom

At the start of the lesson

- The Entry Routine is followed

During the lesson

- Use STAR to gain the attention of all students
- Follow a cycle/cycles of I do, You do, We do

I do	Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning. Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step. Ask a large number of questions and check the responses of all students. Provide models.
We do	Guide student practice. Check for student understanding. Obtain a high success rate.
You do	Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks. Require and monitor independent practice, ensuring well-presented work from all students Engage students in regular review of prior learning.

- Check for well-presented work

AT THE END OF THE LESSON

- The **Exit Routine** is followed

3.3 Embedding Learning Habits into Every Lesson

While the COLAI Lesson provides the structure and sequence for progression, it is our Learning Habits that bring the lesson to life. They are the practical behaviours and routines that ensure every student is engaged, thinking, and learning actively.

COLAI = Structure | Learning Habits = Thinking and Engagement

The COLAI Lesson tells us *how to structure learning*. The Learning Habits tell us *how to get students to engage in it*. They are not a new layer or an add-on. They are the tools we use to ensure that all students are focused, involved, and experiencing the full power of the lesson.

We do not assume our students arrive as expert learners. We explicitly teach them how to learn - how to listen, how to think, and how to participate actively in the learning process.

Why Learning Habits Matter

We are proud our school community, but we are realistic about the challenges many of our students face. We know that:

- Not all students arrive with automatic focus, self-regulation, or resilience.
- Passive learners make less progress.
- In any classroom, the gap between participation and actual thinking can be wide.

That's why our Learning Habits are built around the idea of thinking ratio: the proportion of students in the room who are actively thinking, retrieving, rehearsing, or responding at any given time. The higher the thinking ratio, the more learning happens.

These habits are simple, powerful routines that support attention, retrieval, participation, and memory. They promote equity by engaging all students, not just the few who always raise their hands.

4. Inclusive Practice: Supporting SEND and EAL

Learners

At COLAI, we believe every student, regardless of background, ability, or starting point, deserves access to high-quality, challenging, and inclusive teaching. While some students benefit from small-group interventions or specialist support, it is great classroom teaching that makes the biggest impact.

Every teacher is a teacher of SEND and EAL. Every lesson must be inclusive by design.

4.1 Supporting Students with SEND: The SAM Strategy

All teachers are expected to implement the SAM strategy in every lesson. It is a simple, high-impact approach that ensures students with SEND are engaged, monitored, and supported throughout the lesson.

SAM Strategy: In-Class Support for Students with SEND

Element	What it means	How to apply it in lessons
S – Seating Plan	Place students where they can best access input and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seat near the front or within easy reach.• Avoid distractions.• Use data to inform decisions.
A – Ask a Question	Target students with SEND to check understanding and encourage participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use cold calling and scaffolded questions.• Allow thinking time.• Use turn and talk to support responses.
M – Mark Their Work	Prioritise live feedback to guide and correct learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check work early in tasks.• Live mark or give verbal feedback.• Address misconceptions promptly.

SAM should be planned for proactively, not used reactively. It complements the information and support provided by the SEND team, teaching assistants, and small-group interventions.

For specific strategies or support, teachers should refer to the SEND register and associated Teacher Advice and Guidance (TAG) documents for individual SEND students, and liaise with the SENCO or designated SEND staff.

4.2 Supporting Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Our EAL department plays a key role in ensuring students with English as an additional language can access and succeed in the curriculum. This includes:

- Targeted small-group interventions
- Support and advise
- Resources and strategies for teachers

Classroom teachers should:

- Pre-teach and reinforce key vocabulary
- Use visuals and model responses
- Encourage structured talk (e.g. Turn and Talk, Choral Response)
- Plan opportunities for rehearsal and repetition

For guidance on supporting specific learners, the EAL team is readily available to advise.

4.3 A Whole-School Responsibility

Inclusion is a shared responsibility. Our values of integrity, respect, and responsibility demand that we create classrooms where every student can thrive.

The full SEND strategy will be shared later this year, but the expectations in this section form the foundation of inclusive teaching at COLAI.

5. Professional Learning and Development

At **COLAI**, we believe that great teaching is the most powerful lever for student success. That's why we are investing in a high-quality, sustained professional development programme that places teaching and learning at the heart of school life.

This year, our CPD focus is on embedding **seven core Learning Habits** into every lesson, for every teacher, across the school.

These strategies are powerful when used consistently and purposefully. They promote engagement, clarity, and participation and form the building blocks of excellent instruction.

What CPD Looks Like at COLAI

Our professional development model is designed to build expertise, create shared language around teaching, and give everyone access to high-quality support. The offer includes:

CPD Groups (After-School Sessions)

- Held 1–2 times per half term, these sessions build subject and pedagogical knowledge.
- Staff engage with research-informed practice, see strong models of teaching in action, and collaborate with peers.
- All sessions are published in the school calendar.

Weekly Deliberate Practice

- Every Tuesday morning, we run short, focused sessions where staff practise specific teaching strategies, such as cold calling or choral response, in a low-stakes, supportive environment. These run from 8:20am - 8:30am.
- These sessions are designed to build automaticity and confidence in applying core routines.

Instructional Coaching

- This year, we are introducing instructional coaching for all teaching staff.
- Every teacher will take part in three coaching cycles per academic year, with a focus on developing one high-impact area at a time.
- Coaching will initially focus on the seven Learning Habits.
- Later this year, we will introduce StepLab, a coaching platform that will help staff engage more deeply with the coaching process.

INSET Days

- Most INSET days this year will feature dedicated time for teaching and learning, including training, reflection, and curriculum development. There will also be trust-wide INSET days/conferences.

CPD Induction for Trainee Teachers and ECTs

- Trainees and ECTs receive weekly CPD Induction sessions.
- For trainee teachers, these sessions are designed to build core teaching habits and set them up to thrive in their first year of teaching.

- For ECTs, sessions focus on how the content covered in the ITTECF translates into COLAI's classroom context, supporting the development of confident, consistent practice.

Trust-Wide Development Opportunities

- COLAT runs several career development programmes, including:
 - A Middle Leaders Programme
 - An Aspiring Principals Programme
- These are excellent opportunities for growth and collaboration across the trust.

Support for NPQs

- Staff are encouraged to pursue National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) as part of their ongoing development. We support engagement with these programmes at all levels.

A Culture of Growth

Whether you are an Early Career Teacher or an experienced colleague, the CPD model at COLAI is designed to support your development and help you grow. You will be given time, coaching, collaboration, and challenge, all within a culture that values continuous learning for both staff and students.

We are excited to take this journey together. Through shared habits, consistent routines, and high-quality CPD, we are building a school where excellent teaching is the norm, and everyone thrives.

6. Feedback policy

Rationale:

Effective feedback has a significant impact on student outcomes (Hattie, 2007). Feedback can be effective during, immediately after, and some time after student work (EEF, 2021). The three pillars of effective feedback are:

- ✓ *high-quality teacher input*
- ✓ *careful formative assessment*
- ✓ *appropriate timing, and consideration of how students will use the feedback to improve (Colin & Quigley, 2021).*

Feedback can take many forms - including peer, verbal, whole-class and individual.

What feedback looks like in lessons:

Non-negotiables

- Students should receive frequent feedback in each lesson to immediately identify and address any misconceptions there and then. This could include:

High-ratio feedback

- Providing whole-class feedback following AfL methods such as:
 - Using mini whiteboards to assess student learning and understanding
 - Using choral response to assess recall of key information
 - Using true + false / ABCD cards in response to multiple choice questions
- Live marking & annotating student work under the visualiser
- Testing literacy and spelling on mini-whiteboards
- Giving whole class verbal feedback following a task / after reading several student books

Individual feedback

During a lesson, a teacher may also:

- Provide verbal feedback to individual students
- Live mark / provide written comments on a student's work

What feedback looks like in books / on student work:

Non-negotiables

- Students use green pen to review their DO NOW task in every lesson and when completing DIRT tasks, reviewing or editing their work
- Students should receive feedback on assessments including:
 - ✓ *Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time tasks which are checked for improvement*
 - ✓ *Feedback on literacy using the literacy codes*
- Target sheets are completed following an assessment, in a timely manner with meaningful targets focused around subject specific skills
- Assessments need to be available to view, and the related DIRT task needs to be visible
- If providing written feedback, teachers use red pen and teaching assistants use purple pen

- Presentation of work must be checked regularly during lessons and if this falls below expected standard then it must be addressed by asking students to re-produce their work
- Any sheets should be stuck in during that lesson and they should not be folded, teachers should ensure they allow enough time for this to be completed
- The frequency of marking is below. This refers to a 'deep mark' where students receive feedback on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve - which informs a DIRT task. The frequency can include assessments.
 - Key stage 3 at least once per half term
 - Key stage 4 at least twice per half term
 - Key stage 5 at least twice per half term per teacher, or three times if there is one class teacher

When providing feedback, a teacher may also:

- Use green and pink highlighting on extended writing (at least a paragraph) to identify success and areas to improve

Self-Evaluation of feedback

The effectiveness of feedback will be assessed in the following ways:

- Weekly checks by Curriculum Leaders during department meetings – please note presentation will be checked regularly and will be checked every week during half term 1
- Learning walks to view the immediacy and efficacy of feedback given during lessons
- Book looks to check consistency of application of non-negotiables and department policy which involve comparing student work at different points to assess understanding and output
- Speaking to students and asking them questions which allow them to demonstrate their understanding and if they know how to improve their work

Feedback on a departmental level

All departments follow our non-negotiables but decide what makes effective feedback on a subject level and the frequency of this.

7. Homework policy

Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise standards for all students across all subjects by creating a baseline of knowledge in any given discipline through recall-based activities To embed good habits around independent learning
Targets / outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a consistent approach to homework so that it is regularly set and completed by students
Roles and responsibilities	
Students will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record all homework tasks in planners Check Google Classroom/MCAS for details of homework tasks set Complete homework tasks set to the best of their ability and submit on time Re-do any homework tasks that have not been completed or poorly completed
Teaching Staff will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear instructions to ensure all students know how to complete the task set Ensure instructions of homework tasks are on Google Classroom/Bromcom including any resources that may be required by students and the deadline when the task is due Monitor students recording homework tasks in their planners Check completion and submission of homework tasks with the Curriculum Leader and sanction the non-completion of homework tasks with a 20-minute detention
Curriculum Leaders will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an appropriate online platform and have a clear rationale for this Ensure centralised online homework tasks are set for year groups to complete each week according to the timetable based on recall activities Monitor the setting and submission of homework during the weekly department meeting, ensuring that sanctions are set for non-completion Monitor consistent non-completion and intervene accordingly Ensure that parents / carers can monitor homework being set and completed by their child
Senior Leaders will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide each year group with a homework timetable Monitor and evaluate the impact of homework across the academy Ensure excellent practice is shared
Parents and carers will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check their child has read their homework timetable and has logged onto Google Classroom every day for details of homework tasks set Check they have completed homework tasks prior to the deadline
Related documents:	CPD slides on setting effective homework tasks

COLAI homework – Guiding principles

- **Accessibility:** All online tasks set are recall based activities and are accessible to all students. Students who need additional support can access this in the library after school each day.
- **Feedback:** Students will receive an instant score or a percentage depending on the online programme used for the homework task, this will be automatically generated to support staff workload with marking, and providing feedback to students.
- **Routine:** Homework is set regularly according to the timetable. Students note down the homework in their planners. Homework tasks are on Google Classroom.

KS3 Core Subjects: Maths, English Science.	30 minutes of homework per week
KS3 Non-core subjects: Y7-Y9 Computer Science Art Technology R.E Drama Music MFL History Geography	30 minutes of homework per fortnight
KS4 All subjects	1 hour per week per GCSE subject (this is the minimum requirement)
KS5 *Please note that KS5 homework should also include regular online recall-based activities that should be set with other subject / course appropriate independent tasks	3 hours per week per A-Level / BTEC subject

Self-Evaluation of homework

The effectiveness of homework will be assessed in the following ways:

- Weekly checks by Curriculum Leaders during department meetings
- Curriculum Leaders check homework is set on Google Classroom / Bromcom and track rates of completion through their online platform
- Checking of homework detentions set by Curriculum and Senior Leaders

8. Literacy policy

Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise standards for all students across all subjects To develop students' skills in all areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening To promote a shared view of literacy and literacy development across the curriculum and provide appropriate staff development To teach students to read a range of texts fluently and with understanding using reading strategies that are appropriate to the subject
Targets / outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enjoy reading Students achieve the highest possible levels of attainment at all key stages
Roles and responsibilities	
Students will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always carry an appropriate reading book as part of their equipment Read aloud in lessons when asked to do so Attend compulsory literacy intervention sessions where directed such as Rapid Readers Check their own work after completing extended writing
All staff will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use agreed strategies in the delivery and promotion of the whole school literacy programme as determined annually. For 2025-26 these are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Every student should read aloud weekly</i> <i>Regularly set extended writing where appropriate and ask students to self-assess their work</i> <i>Insist on full sentences (for oral and written responses where appropriate)</i> <i>Ask students to upgrade the word in verbal and written responses</i> <i>Embed opportunities for purposeful dialogue using the prompts</i> <i>Mark for literacy in accordance with the Feedback Policy</i>
In addition, teaching staff and teaching assistants will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be role models for reading and oracy Support and participate in whole academy reading initiatives Identify and teach relevant tier 2 (high frequency) and tier 3 (subject specific) vocabulary using explicit instruction Ensure they are familiar with specific literacy demands of their subject and ensure sufficient coverage of these skills in their lesson planning Use relevant subject specific displays in classrooms / learning areas to support students' literacy
Subject Leaders will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and evaluate literacy development within the curriculum area Ensure opportunities for reading aloud and purposeful dialogue are embedded within the curriculum Make clear subject specialist demands
Senior Leaders will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff have appropriate training to support students with low and high literacy levels Monitor the delivery of literacy skills across the curriculum

Parents and carers will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use relevant materials to support their child with literacy at home• Ensure their child has an appropriate reading book to bring to school
Tutors will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide all students with the opportunity to read aloud weekly• Provide weekly feedback to students on their reading
Related documents:	Feedback Policy

9. Appendices and Templates

Appendix 1 The COLAI Lesson - in detail

Before the lesson

SEATING PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers have a seating plan for each class they teach.• SEND students and those students making the least progress are sat at the front of the class wherever possible.• Seating plans are created taking account of student data.• All seating plans are saved on Bromcom and are reviewed after assessment points.
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At the start of the lesson

ENTRY ROUTINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers ensure students enter the room in silence.• They greet/welcome each student individually as they enter.• The uniform of each student is checked as they enter.• The class are greeted when they are all in the room and have their equipment on the desk.• Students are instructed to take a seat in silence.• The Do Now activity is ready.
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During the lesson

STAR	<p>Teachers ensure that the STAR technique is used when addressing the class. The component parts of STAR are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit up with nothing in your hands• Track the speaker• Arms folded on the desk• Ready to contribute
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- Teachers follow a cycle/cycles of I do, You do, We do

The COLAI Lesson – in detail (continued)

<u>I do</u>	<p><u>SILENT DO NOW</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers have a silent Do Now activity planned which is immediately accessible to students and does not require teacher input.• The activity should require a written response from students and must be completed in silence.• The Do Now will usually focus on retrieval practice and should last approximately four minutes. The use of a timer is encouraged.• The Do Now is reviewed and corrected by students in green pen. <p><u>PRESENT NEW MATERIALS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers present new learning in small steps so as not to overload students' working memory, using slides (where appropriate) which are clear and uncluttered.• This may include (but is not limited to) an explanation, elaboration, a demonstration or modelling activity, or the inclusion of concrete examples and use of non-examples.• Teachers model their own thinking to help students develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills. <p><u>MAKE USE OF AfL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher asks many questions to check for understanding throughout the “I do” phase of the lesson so as to decide their next steps: reteach or move on.
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<u>We do</u>	<p><u>GUIDE STUDENT PRACTICE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers provide a high level of practice for all students, moving from providing heavy guidance as students begin their practice to preparing students for independent practice.• Teachers guide student practice using prompts and retrieval cues, via further modelling or by providing worked examples.• This phase of teaching may also include techniques that promote automaticity, e.g. rote repetition, reading aloud as a class, note-taking, or with the highlighting or annotation of texts.• Teachers are aware of the needs of individual needs of students, including those with SEND, and scaffold tasks and deploy additional adults to support as appropriate. <p><u>CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers use AfL techniques to assess what students have understood and plan for opportunities to check student understanding. Such techniques may include cold calling, use of mini-whiteboards, talk tasks and or quizzes. <p><u>HIGH SUCCESS RATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers seek to achieve an optimal success rate of approximately 80% before moving on with the lesson. This indicates that the material is being delivered in small enough chunks to allow mastery before moving on to new content.
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You do

PROVIDING SCAFFOLDS

- Teachers provide scaffolding to minimise students' cognitive load when tackling difficult tasks.
- Structured steps are put into place to enable students to meet the level of challenge required. Scaffolding is removed as soon as possible.

MONITORING INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

- Teachers clearly state expectations on how the task will be completed (i.e. silently or quietly in pairs, giving timeframes, highlighting resources which can be used to support).
- Teachers circulate, monitor, support and continue to question students once they are working independently and check for well-presented work.
- The teacher may encourage students to explain or reflect on their learning or may employ live marking techniques where appropriate.
- Teachers are aware of the individual needs of students, including those with SEND, and scaffold tasks and deploy additional adults to support as appropriate.
- Feedback is timely and takes many forms; written, verbal, teacher-led, self-led and peer-led.

REVIEWS

- Regular low stakes tests or quizzes are used as a means of retrieval practice and also to allow teachers to check for understanding.

WELL-PRESENTED WORK

- Exercise books are neatly presented, with Target Sheets completed and up to date.
- Class work is clearly labelled, with the lesson title and date underlined with a ruler.
- Work sheets are glued into books or kept in folders and are not folded.
- Students write in blue or black and correct in green.
- Poorly presented work is re-done.
- Teachers consistently check work completion and quality of presentation.

AT THE END OF THE LESSON

EXIT ROUTINE

- Students are asked to stay in their seats and pack away their equipment.
- When the students have packed away, they are asked to stand, tuck chairs under desks and stay behind their chairs in silence.
- The teacher moves towards the door and stands in the corridor ready to monitor exit from the classroom.
- The class is dismissed in small groups and directed towards their next lesson.

Appendix 2 The Learning Habits - in detail

1. STAR (*Sit up straight, Track the speaker, Arms folded on the desk, Ready to contribute*)

WHEN? Any time you need students' full attention

WHY? Students cannot learn what they don't attend to

BY? "3, 2, 1 STAR!" then maintain through teacher radar

Checklist:

- Sitting up straight, back vertically upright
 - Arms folded, and resting on the desk
 - Pupils never interrupt the teacher
 - Pupils' eyes are always tracking the teacher
 - Pupils are always in STAR during teacher instruction
-

2. Checking for Listening

WHEN? After modelling, imparting information or addressing misconceptions, but before checking for understanding

WHY? To ensure that everyone is listening and able to take part

BY? "What did Student B say... Student A?" / "An atom is [...] What is an atom...Student B?"

Checklist:

- All students in STAR
 - Teacher poses question before choosing a pupil
 - The pupil uses full sentences when answering
 - The pupil uses their university voice or is prompted to do so by the teacher
-

3. Whole-Class Ruler Reading

WHEN? Every time students are reading together as a class

WHY? Builds simple routines for active reading

BY? Modelling, teacher radar

Checklist:

- Teacher is modelling ruler reading under a visualiser
 - Book flat on the table
 - Students place their ruler underneath the line being read out
 - Both hands on either side of the ruler (using their fingers to drag the ruler down)
 - Frequently monitor that all students are following the right line
 - Teacher uses 'finger freeze' when getting pupils attention
 - Teacher never begins talking until all pupils are using finger freeze
 - Teacher uses oral close to monitor everyone is listening and tracking the text
 - Teacher uses 'Susan pick up.' to move between readers
-

4. Turn and Talk

WHEN? When students need to rehearse their answers

WHY? To consolidate learning, review or generate ideas

BY? When I say go, door side/window side, turn to your partner and discuss the answer. You have one minute... Go!"

Checklist:

- Instruction sandwich: When I say Go and not a second before...you have...to...Go!
 - Voice equity - teacher allocates who speaks
 - Students turn their upper body to face their partner
 - Discussions are always stopped at their peak
 - Students speak in full sentences
 - 3,2,1 STAR is used and all pupils comply immediately
 - All pupils in STAR before feedback or next phase.
-

5. Mini Whiteboards (to check for understanding)

- WHEN?** After key content, before independent practice
- WHY?** To gather accurate data from the class and address misconceptions
- BY?** Use a clear mini whiteboard routine: “When I say go, not before, show your boards. 3, 2, 1 show!”

Checklist:

- Pupils in STAR
 - Instruction sandwich: When I say Go and not a second before...you have...on your MWB....to...Go!
 - 3,2,1 board held upside down and hovering, both hands on either side
 - When show me is used, students hold their boards at different levels:
 1. Front row: boards resting on the desk
 2. Second row: boards under their chin
 3. Third row: board resting on the top of their heads
 4. Fourth row: board held with extended and locked arms above their heads
-

6. Cold Call

- WHEN?** Key moments to gauge understanding
- WHY?** Raises thinking ratio and addresses misconceptions
- BY?** “What does ‘extinguish’ mean... [pause]... Student A?”

Checklist:

- All students in STAR
 - Teacher poses question before choosing a pupil
 - The pupil uses full sentences when answering
 - The pupil uses their university voice or is prompted to do so by the teacher
-

7. Choral Response and Repetition

Choral Repetition

- WHEN?** Any time students encounter complex new words
- WHY?** To build familiarity and confidence
- BY?** “I say ‘ambiguous’, you say...” “Let’s try that again: I say...”

Choral Response

- WHEN?** After introducing new knowledge or to correct misconceptions
- WHY?** Increases whole-class participation and checks understanding
- BY?** “Which part is the metal in Sodium Chloride. On two. One. two... [students answer]”
“And Chloride is the ... On two. One two... [students answer]”

Checklist:

- Both feet firmly planted on the ground.
- Teacher appropriately uses I say, you say or (insert word or phrase)..OR On two. One. two ...
- All pupils respond in their university voice (Loud and Proud)

Appendix 3 Evidence base for the Learning Habits

1. STAR

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion 3.0*

- **Technique:** *STAR/SLANT* is a foundational behaviour routine for maximizing attention.
- **Why it matters:** Lemov argues that attention is a prerequisite for learning. STAR establishes a consistent posture and behaviour set that signals attentiveness and readiness to learn.
- **Quote:** “Students cannot learn what they do not attend to. The teacher’s job is to teach students to focus—consistently, immediately, and reliably.”
- **In practice:** It becomes a **non-negotiable norm** of the classroom, helping avoid low-level disruption and wasted cognitive bandwidth.

2. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

- **Framing:** Classroom culture is built on *clear, practiced routines*.
- **Key link to STAR:** Bambrick stresses that expectations must be taught explicitly, practiced, and reinforced relentlessly—especially those involving attention and body posture during instruction.
- **Strategies:** Immediate feedback, practice with corrections, and use of countdowns (“3-2-1 STAR”) are aligned with how STAR is implemented.

3. Adam Boxer – *Ratio*

- Boxer doesn't reference STAR directly, but his emphasis on “**thinking ratio**” supports it:
 - You want as many students thinking, attending, and engaging as possible.
 - STAR contributes by ensuring students are *physically* in a state that supports cognitive engagement.
 - **Tracking the speaker** supports accountability and engagement with classroom dialogue—key to increasing ratio.

4. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) – *Effective Professional Development & Implementation Guidance*

- **Why routines like STAR matter:**
 - Effective implementation relies on *consistent, observable teacher and pupil behaviours*.
 - STAR is a **low-complexity, high-leverage behaviour** that can be embedded quickly with training.
- **EEF Principles met by STAR routines:**
 - **Rehearsal:** Teachers and pupils should practice these habits.
 - **Feedback:** STAR is observable, so teachers can coach it.
 - **Contextualisation:** Easily integrated into normal instruction.

5. Josh Goodrich – *Responsive Coaching*

- **Connection to STAR:** Goodrich encourages coaching teachers on “**bite-sized, high-impact routines**”.
 - STAR is ideal for this because it’s tightly defined, highly observable, and easy to coach on using the “See it → Name it → Do it” cycle.
 - Coaching on STAR gives immediate wins and visible classroom calm, building momentum for deeper instructional habits.

6. *ResearchEd Guide to Leadership with Ambition Institute*

- Focuses on **instructional leadership and school culture**:
 - Leaders must define and train consistent behaviours across classrooms.
 - STAR routines provide a **shared language** for staff and students—crucial in building a calm, high-expectations school culture.
 - Reinforces the idea of “high signal, low noise” routines that reduce teacher cognitive load.

7. Peps McCrea – *The Learning Rainforest / High Impact Teaching*

- McCrea emphasizes the importance of **attention** as the gateway to learning.
 - STAR routines manage limited attention and help ensure instruction is received.
- He also stresses the value of **automating routines** to free up cognitive bandwidth for learning tasks—exactly what STAR is designed to do.

2. CHECKING FOR LISTENING

1. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

- Bambrick-Santoyo emphasises the power of **structured questioning routines** to ensure equity and engagement.
- He stresses **teacher clarity**: students must understand what they’re supposed to be listening for.
- Checking for listening aligns with his focus on “**accountability for all**” — ensuring every student is actively participating and not zoning out.
- Bambrick advocates scripting questions and *holding students to rigorous, consistent standards* for oral answers, which fits with the “full sentences” and “university voice” elements.
- His approach to **immediate feedback** pairs well with checking for listening, as it allows teachers to catch lapses early and redirect.

2. Adam Boxer – *Ratio*

- Boxer’s concept of *Ratio*—maximising the amount of thinking and engagement per student—is supported by checking for listening.
- The habit ensures **all students are cognitively “in the game”** before a comprehension check happens.

- By promoting *active listening* and visible accountability (STAR, directed questions), checking for listening helps raise the *engaged thinking ratio* in the classroom.
- This aligns with Boxer's emphasis on *minimising downtime* and maximising student engagement.

3. Craig Barton / “Tips for Teachers”

- Barton defines checking-for-listening as short, targeted questions asked **during** or immediately after teacher modelling—but *before* the real comprehension check.
- Key principles:
 - Inform students beforehand that they will be checked for listening.
 - Differentiate between checks for listening (attention-focused) vs checks for understanding.
 - If students fail to answer listening checks correctly, it signals they weren't paying attention—not necessarily that they didn't understand—and should be held to account

4. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion 3.0 / 2.0*

- While Lemov doesn't label "checking for listening" explicitly, he places **Check for Understanding (CFU)** at the very heart of classroom practice. In *Teach Like a Champion 2.0*, CFU is expanded into multiple techniques that require teachers to monitor whether students are attending to instruction before assessing comprehension
- His broader work on questioning (e.g., use of *display* and *referential questions*) underscores the importance of intentional question design to reliably test whether
- students have attended to the input before moving on

3. WHOLE CLASS RULER READING

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion*

- *Ruler Reading* fits with Lemov's emphasis on **precision routines** that reduce cognitive load and increase student focus.
- Using a physical guide (the ruler) to keep place is a classic **scaffolding technique**, supporting students to track text and avoid getting lost or distracted.
- The “finger freeze” and “Susan pick up” techniques are examples of **non-verbal and verbal signals** to gain and hold student attention, aligned with Lemov's “No Opt Out” and “Cold Call” habits which ensure accountability.
- The routine helps maintain a **high engagement ratio**, where more students are simultaneously on task.

2. Cognitive Science & Reading Research

- **The Science of Reading (UK & US experts like Louisa Moats, David Kilpatrick, and the Reading League)**
 - Tracking text visually with a physical tool (like a ruler) helps build **visual attention control** and supports **decoding fluency** by reducing distractions (Moats, 2020, Kilpatrick, 2015).

- It also supports **orthographic mapping**—helping learners connect sounds to letter patterns by guiding their eye movements systematically through the text.
- The use of multisensory cues (touch + sight) enhances **working memory and attention**, crucial for young or struggling readers.

3. The National Literacy Trust (UK)

- The National Literacy Trust promotes the use of **active reading strategies** that include tracking text, highlighting, or underlining to improve focus and comprehension (Literacy Trust, 2019).
- Physical guides or rulers help develop **self-monitoring skills** in readers, supporting metacognition about where they are in the text and preventing regression or skipping lines.
- Their work also notes that such strategies are particularly effective for **early readers and students with dyslexia or attention difficulties**.

4. UK Department for Education (DfE) –Reading Guidance

- The DfE’s **‘Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1’** guidance highlights the importance of **guided reading routines that maintain pupil focus and accuracy** (DfE, 2017).
- Using physical cues such as pointing or tracking lines helps teachers ensure all pupils are following along, which aligns directly with the principles behind ruler reading.

4. TURN AND TALK

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion*

Turn and Talk is one of Lemov’s core techniques (TLaC 2.0 & 3.0). He highlights its value in:

- **Building Participation Ratio:** More students talk and think.
- **Rehearsing Answers:** Students prepare answers before speaking publicly—boosting confidence, precision, and quality.
- **Structuring Talk:** Using assigned roles (e.g., “door side/window side speaks first”) promotes **voice equity**.
- **Timing the Stop:** Ending discussions at their peak maintains momentum, maximises energy, and prevents lag.
- **Behavioural Routines:** Combining Turn and Talk with STAR creates predictable transitions and focus shifts.

Lemov also introduces the idea of **“Oral Fluency”**—developed through structured partner talk, especially when full sentences are insisted upon.

2. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

Turn and Talk aligns with several of Bambrick’s instructional norms:

- **Active Participation for All:** Turn and Talk ensures that **100% of students are talking**, not just the confident few.
- **Teacher Radar & Clear Directions:** He insists on tight behavioural framing (“When I say go...”)—a central feature of your instruction sandwich.

- **Rehearsal Before Cold Call:** Students are far more likely to give strong responses publicly when they've had a moment to rehearse in private.
- **Full Sentences:** Promoting academic language is a key theme throughout Bambrick's routines.

He also suggests teachers should **circulate and listen** to conversations in real time—what he calls “real-time feedback”.

3. Adam Boxer – *Ratio*

Boxer's *Ratio* framework focuses on how many students are engaged in thinking—and how deeply.

- **Turn and Talk raises both participation and thinking ratio:** every student is formulating ideas, not just passively watching.
- Emphasises **shared accountability:** when students know their ideas may be shared afterwards, attention and quality rise.
- Boxer supports **preparation for performance:** peer rehearsal improves answer quality and gives quieter students more confidence to participate.

Turn and Talk is one of the most powerful tools for levelling up **cognitive engagement**, particularly when paired with cold calling.

4. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

- In both the *Effective Professional Development* and *Implementation* reports, the EEF supports **collaborative learning**, particularly where it's:
 - **Explicitly structured**
 - **Monitored**
 - **Focused on academic content**
- Their *Oral Language Interventions* guidance highlights that **structured talk supports deeper comprehension**, improved vocabulary, and stronger retention.
- EEF stresses that successful routines like Turn and Talk must be:
 - **Modelled**
 - **Practised deliberately**
 - **Embedded consistently**

Turn and Talk checks all these boxes when implemented with rigour.

5. Peps McCrea – Alignment, Memory, and Engagement

- McCrea stresses that **engagement is effort directed at the learning goal**.
- Turn and Talk provides **guided, low-stakes rehearsal** that supports long-term memory formation through elaboration and retrieval.
- **Codifying routines like Turn and Talk** creates alignment across classrooms and reduces uncertainty for both teachers and pupils.
- Structured talk increases attention and retention by forcing students to **articulate their thinking**—a powerful form of cognitive engagement.

“When routines are consistent and predictable, students can focus on learning, not decoding the classroom.”

5. MINI WHITEBOARDS (to check for understanding)

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion*

Mini whiteboards are featured in Lemov’s **Check for Understanding (CFU)** techniques:

- Lemov describes them as a **"data-rich" tool** — allowing teachers to gather input from all students simultaneously.
- Emphasises the need for a **routinised system** to avoid chaos and ensure responses reflect thinking, not guesswork or peer mimicry.
- The *“hover, wait, show”* model you’ve codified mirrors Lemov’s advice to build **anticipation** and **individual accountability** into the process.
- Ensures **maximum participation ratio** and allows the teacher to **adapt instruction in real time**.

“Without consistent, real-time data, we’re flying blind as teachers.” – Lemov

2. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

- Bambrick identifies **mini whiteboards as a high-leverage CFU** (check for understanding) **strategy** because they allow:
 - **100% participation**
 - Immediate feedback and reteaching
- He promotes tight routines (e.g., holding the board in a certain way, using countdowns) to ensure **clarity and speed**.
- Encourages scanning for misconceptions *before* revealing answers to avoid premature affirmation.
- Connects directly with **"Culture of Error"** – a safe space for revealing confusion that can be quickly addressed.

Bambrick calls for **“constant gathering of real-time evidence”** of learning — exactly what mini whiteboards offer.

3. Adam Boxer – *Ratio*

Boxer champions **whole-class questioning** strategies that maximise **thinking and participation** ratio:

- Mini whiteboards allow all students to **process, commit, and reveal** their thinking—boosting the **cognitive workload** of every learner.
- He’s especially critical of over-relying on hands-up questioning, which leaves many students passive. MWBs solve this.
- Promotes the use of mini whiteboards to **create “retrieval-rich classrooms”**, where students must recall and apply knowledge frequently.

- Emphasises **slowing down the reveal**—the hover and countdown approach is a way to protect *independent thought before social cues* kick in.

4. EEF – Effective Professional Development & Implementation Guidance

- **Formative assessment** (aka checking for understanding) is one of the EEF’s most consistently endorsed high-impact strategies.
- Whiteboards are mentioned in various EEF literacy and behaviour toolkits as a way to promote:
 - **Engagement**
 - **Immediate formative data**
 - **Rapid reteaching**
- Routines like yours align with EEF recommendations to:
 - **Codify and rehearse routines**
 - **Ensure equitable participation**
 - **Use behaviour signals to support smooth transitions**

“It is not enough to plan what to teach; you must also plan how you will know what has been learned.”

5. Peps McCrea – Alignment, Memory, and Attention

- McCrea stresses that **attention is the gateway to learning**.
 - Mini whiteboard routines help *secure and focus attention* through physical involvement and structure.
- They reduce cognitive load for both teacher and students:
 - **Students** know exactly what to do.
 - **Teachers** can quickly gather, interpret, and respond to learning data.
- MWBs support **retrieval, elaboration, and generative learning** — all essential for encoding into long-term memory.

“Great teaching isn’t just about what’s taught—it’s about what’s thought.” Mini whiteboards ensure students think.

6. COLD CALL

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion* (3.0)

- Cold Call is one of Lemov’s signature techniques and a core part of his “Culture of Attention.”
- It creates a culture where **everyone is expected to think**, not just those who raise hands.
- Cold Call should be:
 - **Predictable**: used often, so students know to be ready.

- **Inclusive:** done warmly, so it supports rather than threatens.
- **Planned:** to ensure equity of voice (not just calling on high performers).

“If you want to ensure all students think deeply, you can’t only call on volunteers.”

2. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

- Advocates **systematic use of Cold Call** as a mechanism to raise standards and check for understanding in real time.
- Uses it in concert with rehearsal strategies (e.g. Turn & Talk) and strong student routines.
- Cold Call is part of “high-rigor questioning” that builds **class-wide accountability**.

“Every student must expect to be called on every time... That’s when the bar rises.”

3. Adam Boxer – *Ratio and Teaching for Mastery*

- Emphasises Cold Call as a method to increase the **thinking ratio**: the number of students thinking/responding at any given time.
- Hands-up questioning often reduces ratio and allows cognitive loafing; Cold Call ensures full-class mental participation.

“We want all students to think hard all the time. Cold Call is one way to make that happen.”

4. Peps McCrea – *Motivated Teaching, Powerful Teaching, Habit Formation*

- Cold Call creates **predictable classroom habits** that reduce cognitive load and improve attention.
- When routines are codified (e.g. “Pose, Pause, Pounce”), student effort and attention increase, and habits become **automatic**.

“Behaviour is shaped by what we expect, what we inspect, and what we repeat.”

5. EEF – *Effective Professional Development & Implementation Guidance*

- Cold Call sits within **formative assessment and responsive teaching**.
- Ensures teachers collect **valid, representative data** to adapt their teaching.
- For implementation to work:
 - **Clear routines** must be taught to students.
 - Teachers should receive **coaching and feedback** on delivery.
 - School leaders should **codify and model** routines.

“High-quality questioning strategies enable teachers to adapt teaching in real time.”

7. CHORAL RESPONSE / CHORAL REPETITION

1. Doug Lemov – *Teach Like a Champion*

- Choral response is a core Active Student Response (ASR) strategy for CFU.
- Enables rapid assessment of group understanding, minimising lag in teaching feedback.
- Offers the teacher visibility into total class cognition, not just volunteers.
- Supports precision routines and behaviour norms that keep energy and expectation high.
- Lemov notes that choral response can generate a “*crisp, snappy energy*” in the room and contribute to a **positive culture of excellence**.
- He refers to “**whole-class rhythm**” and *shared performance* as a tool to build engagement and motivation.

“It’s not just about compliance. It’s about energy, pace, and shared momentum.”

2. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo – *Get Better Faster*

- Encourages whole-class engagement techniques to check for understanding en masse.
- Structured repetition and choral routines make information stick and help diagnose confusion before moving on.
- Reinforces the importance of teacher modelling and class-wide rehearsal for clarity.

3. Adam Boxer – *Ratio*

- Choral response significantly increases the **thinking ratio** by engaging all students simultaneously.
- Prevents passive listening and raises cognitive energy across the class.
- Repetition aids retrieval practice—forcing recall enhances retention.

4. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

- ASR techniques are highlighted as high impact formative assessment tools.
- Choral response supports **equity** by engaging every student, not only volunteers.
- The EEF emphasises the need to codify routines, rehearse them, and coach their use for high fidelity.

5. Peps McCrea – *Alignment, Attention, Memory*

- Choral repetition reduces cognitive load: predictable repetition frees mental bandwidth for deeper processing.
- Helps embed new vocabulary or concepts quickly through retrieval practice.
- Choral routines foster a sense of belonging and shared ritual in the classroom, boosting motivation and attention. In his *snack* on Choral Response, he says:

“It creates a sense of rhythm and unity. Done right, choral response can be highly energising and morale-boosting for learners.”