

# SIRIUS ACADEMY WEST

Teaching and Learning Magazine

Issue  
No 1

THE  
CONSTELLATION  
TRUST



Introduction from  
HOS

12 & 13  
Fashion

26 & 27  
Safeguarding



**Sirius**  
ACADEMY WEST

WHERE STARS ARE BORN



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# INTRODUCTION

## FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL



Regardless of the culture, custom, language or geographic location, as teachers, we all contribute to a common aim. Every teacher goes to work, each day with one sole objective: to instil students with a sense of purpose, a place in the world, to broaden their horizons both intellectually and interpersonally.

Teachers are - in many respects - the architects of a functioning and efficacious society, we utilise our knowledge, and pastoral sensitivity to enable our young people to realise their potential and progress onto their desired vocation.

However, despite these honourable goals and our undeniable impact, due to our hectic schedule and need to do the best for our students, we can forget the wonderful, innovative things that we take for granted every day.

I am just as guilty! Reading a reputable and widely distributed teaching magazine (naming no names), I marvelled at the originality and freshness of the ideas. Coming into school the next morning, I was excited to trial and implement all of this “borrowed” practice only for Abbey, or Diane, or Rick, or James Evans to say: ‘Yeah, go and see teacher A in Science, she’s been doing that with her classes since November’ and ‘Teacher B in Art saw that on some CPD and he’s trialled it with his Ruby class, he says it’s brilliant’.

First, I reproached myself for my ignorance, then I (naturally) forgave myself and realised, this is symptomatic of our wonderful teaching profession. We are too quick to modesty, too shy to promote ourselves.

It is my hope that this magazine will be the beginning of the end of said shyness. I am not only hoping you show off all of the wonderful things we get up to at Sirius Academy West, I am actively encouraging it. This magazine will not be a pamphlet of us exhibiting the latest 'en vogue' technique, filled with theoretical promise but minimal substance. This magazine will contain real, practical strategies that we can all implement to develop and enhance teaching practices and perspectives. This magazine will ensure that our unique, individual, challenging and rewarding cohort get the education they deserve.



Within this first issue you will see the brave pioneers, those who were willing to jump to soften the landing for subsequent contributors. I am impressed by their clarity of communication, invention of ideas and courage to blaze the trail.

So, it is with great pleasure I present the first edition of our new Teaching and Learning magazine. I hope it sparks ideas, informs practice, and – most importantly – gets your ideas percolating so you can be a contributor to the next edition.

**Gemma Ransom – Head of School and (now former) reader of TES.**





# P LUGGING GAPS FROM ABSENCE



In 2016, the DFE published research on the correlation between absence and attainment at KS4. Unsurprisingly, the higher the overall absence rate, the lower the level of attainment at the end of KS4, with pupils with no absence 3.1 times more likely to achieve a level 5 or above in all of their subjects at GCSE. Only 3% of pupils with absence over 50% achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4-9 which explains why pupils with persistent absence are less likely to stay in education after the age of 16 years.

At SAW, disadvantaged pupils tend to have a higher absence rate than their peers. In a normal year (non-Covid) the absence of PP students is usually 4 times higher than non-PP students. This trend is also seen nationally as identified by the DFE. With the covid-19 pandemic, a significant proportion of pupils nationally were out of education from 23rd March until 7th September and are now out of education from 6th January. The new lockdown has widened the gap between PP and non-PP students, particularly where they are working from home and have limited access to electronic devices. The academy has actively tried to reduce these barriers through provision of laptops and wireless dongles (though resource is limited), revision guides and workbooks and printed workpacks where all else fails.

When considering the impact of attendance and deprivation on attainment, it is worth noting that during the first national lockdown, 74% of privately educated pupils either attended school for full days or had full days of live online lessons, twice that of pupils in state education. A quarter of pupils nationally had no formal schooling at all. Children from higher income homes were also more likely to spend time on home learning with parents who were not at work, have their own study space at home and have access to computers and tutors.

Working at home presents a significant challenge for some of our pupils and their parents. In a parent and student survey identifying the barriers that pupils had faced during their absence in the first lockdown, a large proportion of students responded that motivation was their biggest barrier to learning at home. Without the praise and encouragement of their teachers, pupils felt that they became more easily disengaged. Working at home, in isolation and often with limited support, increased anxiety and stress. It is tempting to infer that for pupils from high income households, the access to resources and support prevented the barrier of motivation experienced by some of our pupils. Sharing a bedroom, having no place to work quietly at home, parents who may have to work throughout the lockdown and no laptop makes the challenge of building up the motivation to learn so much harder.



Perhaps this shows that the role of the teacher is to encourage and support, to respond to barriers quickly to stop pupils becoming disengaged, with timely reward and praise that motivates pupils to try harder. A challenge for online learning, but one we must collectively address to ensure a fairer chance for our pupils. Gaps in learning will impact outcomes for pupils and their future prospects. It is essential that we work to identify pupil barriers as a team, supporting where we can to get every student working at home or in the academy.

Educational research suggests a strategy to mitigate the impact of deprivation is the rigorous monitoring and use of data by class teachers to identify gaps in learning. Regular identification of gaps caused by absence with explicit plans on how to address them is crucial to supporting our pupils to achieve. This level of differentiation poses a significant challenge for teachers where pupil attendance to the academy is variable each day, and where attendance online can be dependent on pupil motivation. To make this process easier for the teacher, keeping good records in planners which track the attendance of pupils in classrooms, identifying the topics they have missed, allows the teacher to respond quickly to quickly teach/re-cap missed content once the student returns from absence (whilst ensuring sufficient challenge and extension for pupils that attended).



# P LUGGING GAPS FROM ABSENCE



Regular marking of exercise books or online work, allows the teacher to identify gaps and leave a message for the absent pupil detailing the need to catch up and the topic that they have missed. To support absent students, I print/share the key facts from the previous lesson, and, whilst the rest of the class are completing their connect and/or practice for retrieval tasks I explicitly teach the facts on the sheet for the previously absent students, who make notes and answer questions in their books.

In order for this to work, the rest of the students are reminded of my expectation that they must work silently whilst in the building and only use the chat function for questions, whilst I am re-teaching. I ensure that I provide sufficient support for the students who are completing their work independently. Afterwards I review the answers to the retrieval practice starter, to ensure any gaps for students who have attended are identified and plugged before I move on to the new content.

I am in regular contact with my students by email to praise them for their effort and to chase them for missing work, removing barriers where I can. Where this isn't working I call home to their parents/guardians to identify if there is anything further we can do, and follow up concerns with the year teams. If students miss deadlines, I give them extensions and check that any barrier to them completing the work is removed where possible. When they submit, even if late, they receive a praise email so they know that their work has value. This has meant that when they return to school they will not be as far behind their peers as they could have been.



# STAFF WELLBEING

## Looking after your own wellbeing

Remote teaching and live lessons are a learning curve for us all, I've lost count of the number of times I've felt the students knew more about the technology than I did. Most of the challenges, once I tried, were easier than expected, but it doesn't take away from the stress of knowing you have to change how you have been teaching.

So in true PSHE style, here are some recommendations for when you just need a break.

### 1. Remember why you wanted to teach

### 2. Separate your work and home space

Set a time to finish working and keep to it. Put your school work out of sight for the evenings and weekends. You need a break from working. Don't answer e-mails during your evening or weekend.

### 3. Remain in contact with people

Sometimes you just need to talk to someone who understands teaching. Your colleagues are available at the end of the phone, keep in touch and remember sometimes you just need a good chat. Maybe on these long dark nights when we are all stuck at home you could arrange a department quiz night or virtual drinks night.

### 4. Make an achievable to do list for the day and don't keep adding to it

There will never be enough hours in a day. Keep a realistic view of what can be achieved and don't stress about the impossible. Look for methods to reduce the workload, e.g. students self marking on Teams could reduce the marking you need to do each lesson.

### 5. Reward yourself

Some staff are rewarding themselves with a little present delivered to their home on a Friday to get them through the week. If you're feeling positive send someone else a little gift to make them smile at the end of the week., everyone appreciates being told they are appreciated.

### 6. Have a lunch break

Get up from the computer and go and have a lunch break. Move to a different room. Have a proper break from the e-mails and the marking.

**If you feel you need to de-stress a little more you could try some of these ideas**

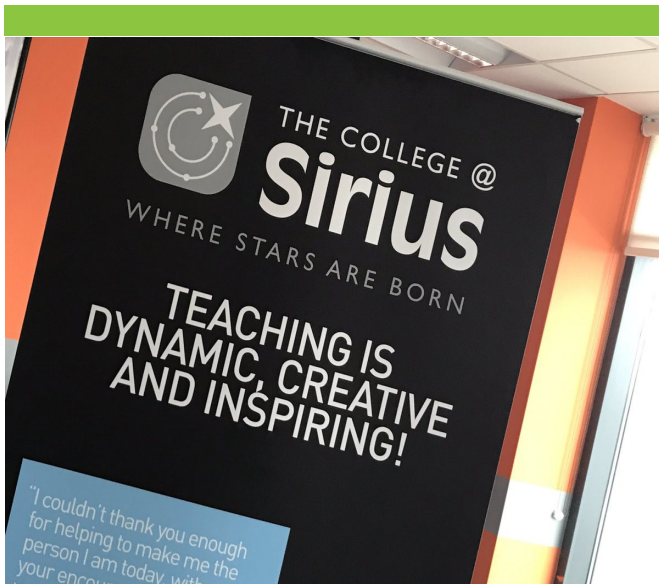
- Online Yoga or exercise classes
- Join sport England – Join the movement campaign to help you exercise at home
- [www.hcctraining.ac.uk](http://www.hcctraining.ac.uk) offer a free mindfulness training course in February
- Join an online course and learn a new skill or try Duolingo for a new language
- Join the wellbeing challenges that are being set for the students
- Join an online art class

<https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/tips-for-teacher-wellbeing>



# S SCIENCE

## EFFECTIVE ONLINE LEARNING AT KS5



Online learning cannot provide or even begin to emulate many of the informal social interactions students have at sixth form, but how can we as practitioners use online learning platforms to move our students forward in their learning? Online lessons are generally not as effective as in-person classes, but they are certainly better than no classes. Being in person with teachers and other students creates social pressures and benefits that can help motivate students to engage.

In the online setting, students will have more distractions and the lack of interactions, which may contribute to reducing their motivation. Therefore, we will need to set norms for engagement, such as requiring students to regularly ask and respond to questions as well as provide feedback to their peers.

The ability to effectively communicate, manage technology, deliver and assess content becomes especially important in online lessons, where there is less available time to become accustomed to new tools and methods of teaching. Easy, right?

## Planning

A well-planned scheme of work is essential to overcome barriers presented by online learning. Therefore, online lessons need a strong curriculum and strong pedagogical practices. Ensuring your lesson is planned to stimulate and motivate learners at home is vital. Using a variety of formats to deliver content is key in overcoming disengagement. To engage students, the lesson should incorporate discussions, collaboration, videos, audio clips, and hands-on exercises with text and possibly research tasks. The aim is to plan a lesson that encourages an actively learning online classroom.

## Chunking

Long lectures are obviously not the way to engage a face-to-face class – and it is even more futile online. So break down the content you need to deliver, in manageable chunks in a variety of formats. Have you created gifs before to illustrate a process on PowerPoint? Could students be assigned topics, which they must teach each other in short segments? PechaKucha is a method of delivering 20 slides with 20-second commentary each slide. Simple. Engaging. Spurring authentic connections AND keeps teacher talk to a minimum!



## Questioning

Make sure you are constantly checking for understanding during the lesson, by directing questions at all students. Do not leave questions open ended, as the same students will answer, dominating the lesson and narrowing your grasp of what each student has understood. This leads onto my next topic...

## Quizzes

Effective teacher–student communication in online learning environments relies on timely and clear interactions through a variety of formats including email, chat, live class questions, assessment and feedback provision. In the absence of more immediate feedback methods available, the assessment and feedback provided in online learning environments needs to be as clear and valuable as possible to promote student understanding. Create quizzes on Microsoft teams to assess what each student knows periodically during the lesson. The great thing about these quizzes, are that they self-mark and it allows you to identify areas requiring clarification, providing students with immediate, effective and timely feedback.



# F

## ASHION

### THE (FANNY) PACK IS BACK



In the height of back-to-school season, teachers have spent their time planning, spring cleaning their classrooms, setting up new displays and more than often treating themselves to a new outfit or two. After all a teacher got to look sharp for their first day of school. Normally, treating myself to a new, highly inappropriate (for an art teacher) cream blouse, slick blazer or some statement earrings would be the go-to for me.... but not this year!

This year you need COVID CLOTHES! Many of us are taking extra precautions this year when it comes to virus exposure so your clothes are going to take an additional beating from the rounds of chemical exposure they will be subjected to.

Alongside this comes the question “How on earth am I going to carry everything from one to classroom to the next?”

One department came up with a novel answer to this in the form of a ‘Fanny Pack’. And yes, before you spit your coffee out in a furor of laughter, hear me out! Yes, the good old bumbag has made its return in glorious fashion, gone are the days of raving and festival shenanigans instead the iconic bumbag has made its return as a staple piece of fashion within a teacher’s hectic day of day life.





The fanny pack is the ideal companion for the Covid Teacher, it comes in a range of styles, shapes and sizes; ideal for the many items you would lose on your day-to-day travels. For those more brand conscious among us the humble fanny pack has made its high fashion debut, beloved by fashion designers across the world, Calvin Klein, Dior and Louis Vuitton have all jumped onto the bum bag wagon. Ross McGill spoke about the 'Teacher Toolkit' in a metaphorical sense, think of the bum bag as your literal Teacher Toolkit, the ultimate swiss army knife of teacher needs at this time.

**So here is a teacher's survival guide to Covid in handy bum bag size:**

Hand sanitiser (a must, preferably one that doesn't smell like the forgotten cupboard in the science prep room)

Face mask (preferably one that doesn't make you sound like Darth Vader)

Whiteboard pens (an array of different colours for the variety of classrooms you will be travelling to)

Cloth to clean, clean, clean (you never can be too careful)

Rewards Stamp (keep those students motivated and distracted from the fact you sound like Darth Vader in a mask with some positive reinforcement)

Post-its (to make note of the many things you have forgotten to add into your fanny pack)

So upon returning into school, take a moment to consider... 'Do I need a bum bag in my life?'



# MATHS ANXIETY



Settling down into my armchair, knitting on lap, to binge-watch 'Britain's Most Historic Towns' should have been the highlight of my holiday. Alas, All-4 has adverts and I had to endure the Tesco-mum confessing she has not done any Maths work with her son over lockdown #1. Why should I be bothered about such things? Tesco-mum is far from alone.

Maths Anxiety is a (sometimes debilitating) negative emotional reaction towards Maths, and it is unfortunately part of our culture. It is likely why the advertising executives at Tesco chose Maths of all subjects, and certainly why the common response to proclaiming I'm a Maths teacher is, 'I was never any good at Maths'. It is described as an intense anxiety when asked to attempt an unfamiliar Maths question, or upon realisation that a mistake has been made. Perhaps you yourself suffer to some extent with Maths anxiety when asked to cover a lesson or support with homework? This unsettling condition has had a larger impact on our students in 2020, as they've had to tackle Maths through asynchronous remote learning. Girls are more likely to suffer from Maths anxiety, and predictably they have this year dipped behind boys for attainment in Term 1 Maths assessments.

**So how can we overcome Maths anxiety, for ourselves and our pupils?**

A chalkboard filled with various mathematical concepts. In the center, the word "Math" is written in large, white, cursive letters. Surrounding it are numerous mathematical formulas and diagrams drawn in white chalk. These include: 

- Algebraic equations:  $x + y = a^2b$ ,  $xy = ab^2$ ,  $x = \sqrt{\frac{b^2}{c}} +$ ,  $x = -1$ , and a sum of powers of  $-1$ .
- Geometry: A right-angled triangle with vertices A, B, and C; a cylinder; a rectangular prism; a circle; and various line segments and angles labeled with letters like A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- Calculus: A small table of powers of 4,  $4 \times 1 = 4$ ,  $4 \times 2 = 8$ ,  $4 \times 3 = 12$ ,  $4 \times 4 = 16$ ,  $4 \times 5 = 20$ ,  $4 \times 6 = 24$ .
- Other: A ruler, a compass, and various geometric shapes like a parallelogram and a trapezoid.

Do you have tutees or mentees who currently struggle at Maths? Could they need assurance from you that it is normal to struggle, to feel panic; and that if they ask questions, seek answers and keep trying they will become as mathematically able as they imagine the world around them to be.



# ASD

## AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

### What is ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. The causes of autism are still being looked into. Many experts believe that there isn't one specific 'cause', and that there are genetic factors. There is strong evidence to suggest that autism can be caused by a variety of physical factors, all of which affect brain development. Evidence suggests that autism may be genetic. Scientists have been attempting to identify which genes might be implicated in autism for some years. Autism is likely to have multiple genes responsible rather than a single gene. Because autism is a 'spectrum' condition it affects different people in different ways. It is therefore very difficult to generalise about how an autistic person will develop over time. Each person is different, and an intervention or coping strategy which works well with one person may not be appropriate or effective with another.

### Autism in girls and boys

Autism can sometimes be different in girls and boys. For example, autistic girls may be quieter, may hide their feelings and may appear to cope better with social situations. This means autism can be harder to spot in girls.

### Signs of autism in children could include:

- not responding to their name
- avoiding eye contact
- not smiling when you smile at them
- sensory needs for example becoming very upset if they do not like a certain taste, smell or sound
- not seeming to understand what others are thinking or feeling
- finding it hard to say how they feel
- liking a strict daily routine and getting very upset if it changes
- having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities
- getting very upset if you ask them to do something
- finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on their own
- taking things very literally – for example, they may not understand phrases like “break a leg”



## Strategies to support ASD in the classroom:

Get to know the student individually, their interests, sensory needs, where they would prefer to be seated in the classroom and who with. Read the information on their pen portrait and talk to staff who have worked with them previously. Establish a routine with students with autism and they find comfort in the structure of school and the classroom therefore provide them with a clear routine.

Keep any instruction or general classroom communication short, simple and to the point and use one clear instruction at a time. The student will need time to process this. If you need to repeat the instruction, keep it exactly the same, don't change the phrase otherwise they will need to process it all over again.

Say what you mean. Don't use idioms or metaphors as the student may take them literally.

Use the student's name first to gain their attention then address any instruction directly for example, 'Peter, write the learning objective.' Some students may benefit from visual cues which reduce the need for spoken communication. Students with autism need additional time to process information especially verbal communication. Give them additional time to answer questions or to complete an instruction.

Try to pre-warn of any changes to their routine to support their anxiety. One of the many things that make autistic students unique is how they can form highly-focused interests. Integrate their interests into your lessons to support a gateway to learning and motivation. Many students with autism experience sensory sensitivity. This may cause them to have intense positive or negative reactions to sensory stimulation. Consider the learning environment to make it less overwhelming for them.

## Recommended reading and resources

The National Autistic Society has a number of online courses to support understanding of Autism and strategies to support Autism. <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/professional-development/training-and-conferences>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Autism Rights Group Highland - a website with a number of articles and recordings

Autistic Rights Together

National Autistic People's Organisation

Don't mourn for us

Is autism really a disorder?

Identity-First Autistic

Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical

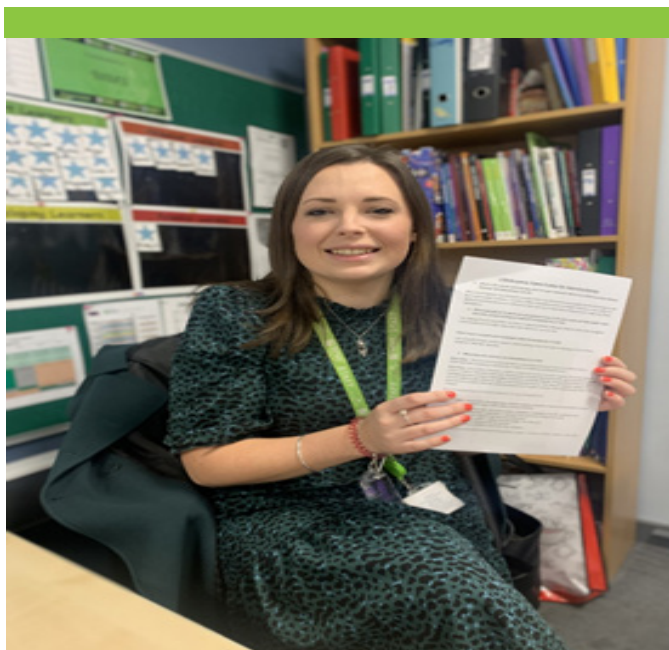
Square talk: the social model

<https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/how-to-support-a-child-with-autism-in-the-classroom/>

<https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2017/06/15/teachingautism/>



# LITERACY PROJECTS



With the new whole school literacy policy being introduced in September, staff have been working hard to ensure that students are improving their literacy skills by explicitly teaching vocabulary, reading and writing.

There were some fantastic literacy projects produced during the first half term. I got my camera and went to chat to staff who produced particularly successful projects.

**Hannah Cropley (Humanities)**

**Hannah's project was about how Frayer Models can be used to improve vocabulary.**

**What did you enjoy most about the project?**

I enjoyed trialling the different strategies with my classes and encouraging them to think about the vocabulary and key words they were using in their work. It was rewarding to see the students not only using tier 2/3 vocabulary in their extended written work, but also to see them remembering specific facts about the key events we have studied in History this year and using this effectively in their written work which is something they need to do to achieve the higher grades at GCSE!

### How did you choose the class to do your project with?

I chose both of my mid ability Y9 classes to do this project with as some of these students often struggle to understand key concepts, especially when these are not concrete. Before completing this project, students would often use key terms in their work, but I was not confident that they actually understood the meaning of the terminology, they were often just repeating the words they had heard.

### Why do you think your project has been so successful?

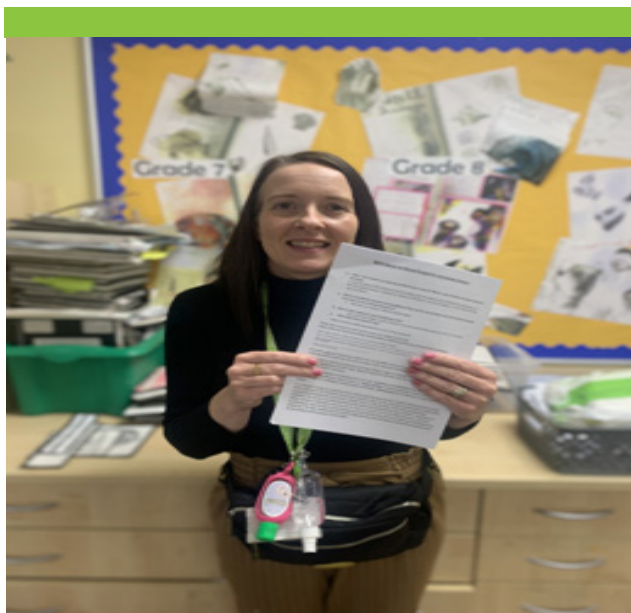
This project has been successful as I have ensured that there is dedicated time for their literacy task each week. This consistency has meant students know exactly how to complete the tasks and is almost second nature to them that they complete the task after they have done green pen improvements. Having the Frayer model templates stuck in their books means students can refer back to them when completing written tasks, they have found them particularly useful for revising for assessments!

### How could your project be used in other subjects?

The Frayer model can be used in any subject. It involves students defining subject specific terminology and then demonstrating their understanding of the word by writing facts/characteristics about the word, identifying examples and non-examples, and then drawing a picture that shows the meaning of the word. The Frayer model template can be adapted based on the needs/ability of classes and the simplicity of the task means that it can be completed independently by students in any of their subjects!



# LITERACY PROJECTS



**Gina Morris (CAPA)**

**Gina's project was all about using questioning to improve writing.**

**What did you enjoy most about the project?**

I enjoyed seeing the group improve their written and spoken literacy, which built their confidence in answering questions, contributing to group discussions and completing all types of written tasks.

**How did you choose the class to do your project with?**

The Year 11 Textiles students find the analysis and research section of their coursework to be difficult, uninteresting and often quite off putting. Due to the cohort being small it seemed the perfect group to trial the new tiered questioning resources and framework and has really given me a good understanding and example of how I can apply it to a larger group.

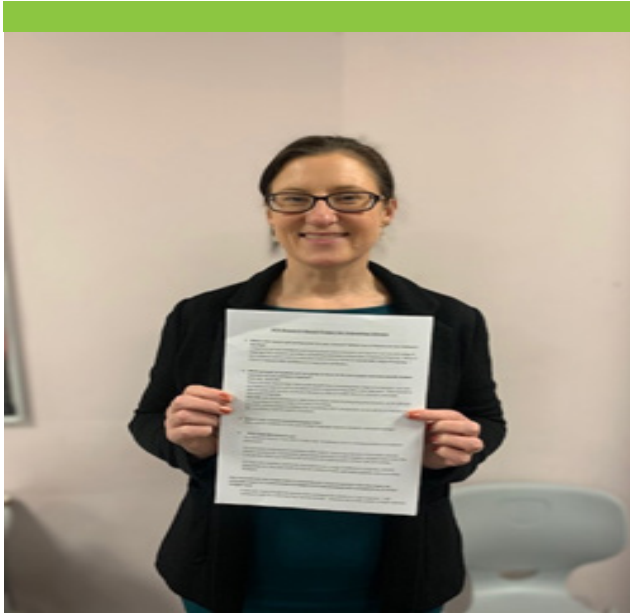
**Why do you think your project has been so successful?**

I think the project worked so well with the group because I was able to create a set of resources which could be tailored to individual student's needs. Again, due to the size of the class I was able to offer individual help and guidance which meant they were able to make progress.

**How could your project be used in other subjects?**

Due to its nature, the tiered questioning techniques can be easily and effectively adapted to be used in any subject.





### **Ange Fairless (MFL)**

**Ange trialled using a thesaurus to find varied vocabulary and exploring how this could improve extended writing.**

### **What did you enjoy most about the project?**

Seeing what vocabulary the students came up with when they used a thesaurus independently.

### **How did you choose the class to do your project with?**

Most of my Reading Response lessons are with Year 8 (plus this class is in an English room, so the resources were there!).

### **Why do you think your project has been so successful?**

I think because it was a simple task for students to do, and I've learnt from using dictionaries in language lessons that they generally enjoy looking things up for themselves.

### **How could your project be used in other subjects?**

This is an easy task that could be used in any subject where essay type answers are needed, by helping students to write 'better' answers using higher level language.



# Q

## UESTIONING

### PART 1



#### What is effective questioning?

Type this question into Google and the first hit you get is; “**Effective questioning** involves using **questions** in the classroom to open conversations, inspire deeper intellectual thought, and promote student-to-student interaction. **Effective questions** focus on eliciting the process, i.e. the ‘how’ and ‘why,’ in a student’s response, as opposed to answers which just detail ‘what’”. This is very true. Let’s explore this in more detail...

#### How can we categorize questioning?

Teachers on average ask about 400 questions per day, that is 70,000 questions per year! However, can you honestly say that all of that questioning is meaningful? Is quality better than quantity? We all know that there are many different types of questioning but are they all necessary?

**1. The yes/no question** – does what it says on the tin. Ask a question, get a yes/no answer. Not a particularly strong method for “inspiring deeper intellectual thought”. **BUT**, this does have its place in a classroom though – if you need some quick AfL for example. But what can you do with this? Can you build on this? Ask why? Question further to really challenge and push students to address their misconceptions.



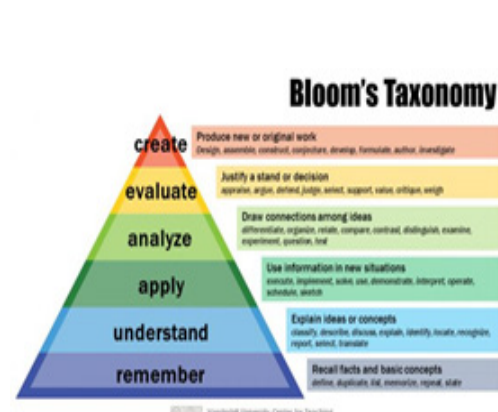
**2. A 'wh-' question** – what/who/where/when/why etc. These type of questions are going to “deepen intellectual thought” and promote discussion. If done correctly, these type of questions will allow students to start thinking about the cognitive processes behind tasks and instructions and in turn creating independent thinking. Try factoring some of these into your planning. Questions should be planned for.

**3. Choice questions** – choice questions will have a place, especially for lower ability pupils who are perhaps struggling to recall information or describe/explain and may need a prompt. But before you give a choice to students, is there another way that you can question them? This shouldn't just be your 'default' questioning technique as sometimes these students will surprise you and not need that prompt especially if you set your expectations high!

### Open vs closed questioning

Open	Closed
How do you get to work?	Do you get to work by driving, busing, or walking?
Tell me about your relationship with your boss.	Do you get on well with your boss?
What did you manage to accomplish on the trip?	Was your trip successful?
What happened at the meeting?	Did you have a good meeting?

Closed questioning techniques, like those listed under point 1 and 3 above are going to allow you, as a teacher, to check understanding quickly. This type of questioning is useful for checking recall on specific facts, often requiring a simple yes/no answer, or true/false. Doing this quick check on mini-whiteboards, or hands-up, or sit down-stand up, whichever method you choose, will allow you to get a whole class picture to see who still needs that immediate intervention. Try using Bloom's Taxonomy to plan for simple closed questions to inform your AfL.



Open questions, on the other hand are going to allow respondents to share, develop and extend their thinking and ideas. Using Bloom's higher level thinking command words, such as synthesise, or evaluate force students to make judgements and go into more detail. You may choose to use lollypop sticks with questions on, or lollypop sticks with students' names on. This is going to improve learning and progress because they test understanding and application of knowledge. When going down this method of questioning, you need to be mindful of thinking and waiting time. We have all been in a situation where we have been put on the spot and stumbled over our words. It is no different for students.



# QUESTIONING PART 2



## Questioning Fact

In Hattie's Visible Learning book, he concluded that an effect size of 0.6 is the equivalent of one GCSE grade per subject or 12 months of learning. Good questioning has an effect size of 0.41. This is over half a GCSE grade just through effective questioning. Try this low cost strategy!

## How about this method:

1. Ask the question
2. Wait 3-10 seconds for the student to answer
3. Student gives answer
4. Wait a further 3-10 seconds to give students more chance to improve their answer
5. Get class feedback - bounce the question around the room, further questions to students to deepen their thinking



## How can we encourage students to ask questions?

Obviously, as a classroom teacher we are the key in pupils making progress and the key to modelling good questioning. Next time you are going to pose a question, try modelling it first. For example, "If  $a + b = c$ , what does this tell us about the properties of  $c$ ?", work through your cognitive processes out loud. Let students hear the thought that is going on before giving them another question to work through using a similar method. Do not be afraid to let students hear what you are thinking. This will allow students to become independent questioners and to tackle unknown situations.

## Hinge questions and big questions

### Which of these is alliteration?

- A – the hot sun glared down
- B – sweetly smiling sunshine
- C – night fell suddenly
- D – the tree stooped in despair

If used correctly, these can be used to engage and inspire students. Use a 'big question' as a starting point, find out what pupils know, question further. Use a hinge question based on an important concept in the lesson that is critical to understand before you can move on. The question should fall midway through the lesson. Every learner must respond within 2 minutes. The teacher should collect and interpret responses from ALL learners in 30 seconds. Mini-whiteboards would be good here! At this point you can make the judgement as to whether you can move on in the lesson or take the time to explore the responses in more detail. The purpose of the hinge question is to allow students to compartmentalise and transition smoothly from one key idea to another, making learning make sense!

### 10 Top Tips

1. Plan your questions
2. Know your purpose
3. Ask open questions
4. Speak your listeners language
5. Use neutral wording
6. Follow general questions with specific ones
7. Focus your questions so they ask only one thing at a time
8. Ask only essential questions
9. Don't interrupt
10. Transition naturally

### Inclusive Questioning Techniques

Think-pair-share - Snowball - Value lines  
Lollypop sticks - Voting - Diamond 9





# S

## AFEGUARDING



Since the Covid 19 pandemic began the importance of school as a safe place for students has been put firmly into the spotlight. Not only has education been disrupted, but many young people found the loss of the company and support of their peers, teachers and wider school community extremely challenging. For vulnerable students, school is an especially important place of visibility and safety. Teachers and support staff see these children more often than any other group of professionals. We have an understanding of their interests, strengths and areas where they need support. We have regular contact with their families and provide a vital link between them and external sources of support.

During the March lockdown, the challenges of safeguarding all of our students came into sharp focus. We had to develop ways to keep in touch, ensure that students were 'visible' to us and other professionals, even when they weren't in the building. New ways of offering support and interventions had to be devised. Effective, timely communication was key to enabling us to do this. The CPOMS system enabled staff, in and out of the building to record all concerns and communications and pass it on to social care and health. Teams meetings took over from face to face core group meetings and Child Protection conferences. These vital communications continued, despite the challenges and enabled social workers and other professionals to coordinate their support. Tracking systems were put in place to make sure someone made regular contact and no child was forgotten.

Where we were concerned about children, socially distanced home visits were completed with social workers to ensure that they were seen and their views sought.

The academy nurse continued to support young people with emotional and mental health concerns via telephone and email. Advotalk and ELSA interventions also continued in this way. Many teaching and support staff worked as a team to make sure that support was offered to students and parents via on-line resources, HeadStart and referrals to Early Help.

As the national media reported, the place of schools in providing children with the basics, like a lunchtime meal became high profile and the subject of celebrity campaigns. The mental health of young people and the particular challenges of remote learning for the most deprived in our community was also raised frequently. The knowledge we have of our students, their families and circumstances helped us to target support, share key information with external agencies and keep them safe.



Some vulnerable students found returning to the academy in September challenging, having developed their own working patterns at home. Communication to reassure families that the school environment was a safe place for them was needed and one-to-one conversations with the pastoral and safeguarding teams were undertaken with each individual to ask about how they had been and any worries they needed to share.

As a school we have a responsibility to ensure that our vulnerable students attend school daily, keep in contact with those who do not, and pass on concerns to safeguarding via CPOMS. In this way we not only improve their educational outcomes, but we ensure that these young people are seen, heard and safe.

Safeguarding vulnerable students requires the continued commitment of all staff at the academy in ensuring we follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Covid 19 Annex which gives specific guidance on how to safeguard children during periods of lockdown.



# R AISING EXPECTATIONS



## Why do we need high expectations in classrooms?

Teachers' expectations of their students' abilities is of great importance and influence over their ability to make progress and achieve. Research shows that as well as expectations of individual students, teachers often have high or low expectations of an entire class; this can be positive for student progress, engagement and motivation if expectations are high, however low expectations can have a detrimental impact. It has been evidenced that students are very aware of their teachers' expectations of them, therefore having high expectations and believing in the students we teach is paramount to their success.

It has been known for some time that raising expectations improves outcomes, with studies being published as early as 1968 on the subject. The positive change brought about by teachers heightening their expectations is known as the **Pygmalion Effect**. The reverse is known as the **Golem Effect**; this leads to students achieving less than they otherwise would have done.

# Sirius Academy West

## 100% of the team, 100% of the time

All staff should tell students which Academy Respect value they have achieved or not met in all behaviour conversations, e.g. You have demonstrated a lack of respect for education by talking over the class teacher.

### Tutor Period:

- > Meet and greet at the classroom door, at least 5 minutes before the tutor period begins
- > Register taken promptly and updated accordingly
- > Review of the daily digest from the previous day with reference to the culture and expectations of students
- > Uniform check in each tutor period and issues reported directly to year teams
- > Tutor activities completed on the correct day
- > Student planners to be checked every tutor period and any students without their planner to be logged for an after-school detention
- > Emphasis placed on positive praise with celebration of excellence and the correct RESPECT stamps put into the planner
- > Class teacher completes an orderly dismissal of the group from behind their seats at the end of the tutor period
- > On assembly days please ensure a silent entry to the main hall and sit next to your tutor group during the assembly
- > A2L reviews to be completed on a weekly and half-termly basis and judgements discussed with students

### Classroom Teacher:

- > Meet and greet students at the door to start the lesson
- > Any lateness to period three or five to be left for a member of the SLT to action
- > Opening activity set prior to the lesson to allow an effective start
- > Ensure all students have their student planner on the desk at the beginning of the lesson
- > Consistent approach to the Behaviour Policy to maintain a consistent culture based on high expectations and positive relationships
- > Emphasis placed on positive praise with celebration of excellence and the correct RESPECT stamps put into planner
- > Class teacher completes an orderly dismissal of the group from behind their seats at the end of the lesson

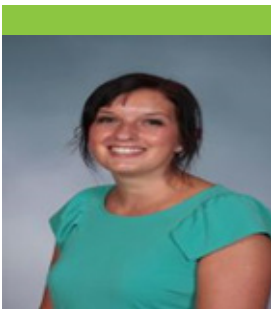
## How can we implement this at Sirius?

At Sirius there are many ways we ensure we have high expectations of our students:

- Ensure consistency using our 100% of the Team, 100% of the time.
- Aim high in your teaching – teach to the top and ensure all lessons are planned to encourage challenge from our students.
- Include expert/challenge tasks to allow for additional challenge from all students.
- No hands up policy – maintains focus from all students in lesson and allows teachers to question every class member.
- Remove barriers to learning in the classroom by having a full understanding of the students within the class.
- Strive for excellence – the minimum expected grade is the starting point.
- Engage with pastoral teams/parents & guardians.



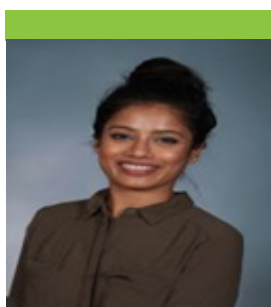
# R ESOLUTIONS



2020 was an unusual year. The Coronavirus came to town and changed all of our lives. We found ourselves in lockdown, unable to see family or friends. We could no longer purchase toilet roll or pasta! We were only allowed out of the house once a day and that was for exercise! Pubs and restaurants were open, then closed, then open and then closed again! It was the year we stood on the street and clapped for the NHS, completed a whole host of challenges for the Sirius Pledge and found time to bike ride, bake or read! It was also the year that saw unprecedented changes to our profession. We taught from home, discovered Zoom, Loom, Teams and Streams! Hand sanitiser became the new glue stick and we adapted to not having a classroom, following a one-way system and staggered timings! We learnt the colour codes of year groups and which stairs and exits they were allowed to use! Throughout all of this, teachers at Sirius Academy West have shown resilience and a real team spirit, ensuring that we always provide the very best for our students- whatever that may look like. So as we enter 2021 and the uncertainty that brings, some of our staff have made resolutions for the new term. What will yours be?

**'To find new and innovative ways to challenge passivity in the classroom.'**

**Vicky Ritchie- Lead Teacher of English**



My teaching and learning resolution for the new year has a literacy focus. It is to use visual dictionaries more frequently to teach tier 2 & 3 key words. I have chosen this, as I have previously found my students gained a greater depth of understanding when using these to explicitly teach key words.

**Rifaah Abedin- Lead Teacher of Science**





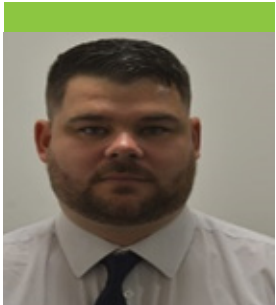
My resolution is to increase the frequency of metacognition activities. I often do this for exam preparation but want to apply it to a broader range of topics/skills.

**Jack Hostead- Assistant Director of English**



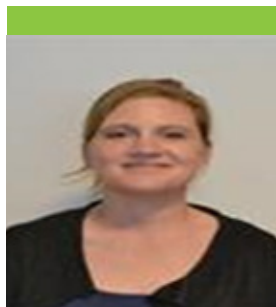
My resolution is to embed Demonstrate Marking more in my teaching. I always plan for it but often find that there isn't the time for it. My resolution is to plan more carefully and devote more time to it. This will allow the students to complete the task successfully without being rushed, allowing students to progress.

**Claudia Lorenz- Lead teacher of MFL**



My resolution for 2021:  
I want to be able to increase the challenge in all my lessons and stretch the more able.

**Grant Baily- Assistant Director of Maths**



My resolution will be to plan in appropriate etymology and Frayer model examples of key vocabulary throughout each lesson of a SOW to ensure that students have a richer vocabulary at the end of the topic. This will allow time for the vocabulary to become embedded and help to combat issues regarding culture capital, especially in our KS4 students studying for exams.

**Kerry Bentham- Lead teacher of English**



My resolution for this year is...  
To include references to tier 2 and 3 exam specific vocabulary in KS4 lessons every week.

**Ange Fairless- Teacher of Modern Foreign Languages**



# R ESOLUTIONS

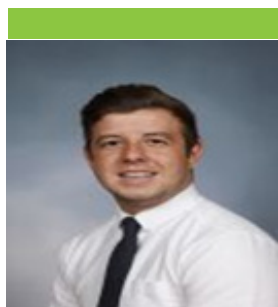


My 2021 resolution is to implement guided reading consistently into my lessons.

I have decided to choose this because often students when faced with an extract from a text or source are immediately daunted by it. Guided reading can take that initial dread of reading away and allows a framework for the students to break down tricky texts into a manageable way. It also allows students to take ownership of their learning by getting students to break down texts paragraph by paragraph summarising in their own words the meanings and ideas of them, therefore gaining a greater understanding of the text or source.

**Ben Busby- Teacher of History**

My resolution for 2021:



I will focus on creating new demonstrate and connect tasks to stretch my students. I see this as one of the most important areas of a lesson, in terms of what a student has learnt and then applied to their answers in a demonstrate task. This is then a great way for me to effectively feedback to students on how to improve further and deal with any misconceptions they may have by creating a connect task. In addition, it becomes a starting point for the next lesson with students starting at varying levels of difficulty based on what they have achieved in their previous lesson.

**Fran Renier- Teacher of Maths**



My new year's teaching resolution is to learn as much as I can about boys, the environments that allow them to learn most effectively, classroom strategies that help them excel, and whether "our" boys have any special quirks that we can exploit to supercharge their learning. I've chosen that because it's an academy priority, and I'm bored of it being an academy priority.

**Ben Carr- Teacher of Science**

# SLG BULLETIN



The Student Leadership Group at Sirius Academy West was elected in September after a tough interview process. The group is aimed at providing a student voice to key staff within the Academy as we work together to create the best possible setting for students and staff alike.

The group, which is open to application by students in Year 11, began the process by writing a letter of application for a role within the group. The Head of School and members of the Senior Leadership Team then interviewed students to ascertain suitability for roles within the group. All students performed to an extremely high standard throughout the process, demonstrating maturity, knowledge and a real determination to help others within our Academy community. The picture below shows the members of the group with Mrs Ransom after she awarded them with their specialised badges for the 2020-21 year.

The students meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss key matters from student voice collations and determine how to present to key staff. These students act independently, setting their own agendas and meet with an open mind to work together to move forward in the best possible way.

The Student Leadership Group were also tasked with creating and running a Christmas competition for all students within the Academy as we looked to create a feel-good mood around the Academy during these challenging times. The Academy community, very well received the competition based on a mix of 'I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here' and the 12 days of advent theme. The Student Leadership Group drove the competition each day with tutor visits and awarding the rewards to groups who participated and met the requirements.

Despite the challenges that we are currently facing, we are excited to see how the group progresses over the coming months and have no doubt that they will have a positive impact on the experiences of the students and staff at the Academy.



# S TAFF

## RECOMMENDED READS



### **Mr Cook – Allison chose: The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown**

Mr Cook-Allison chose a book from his favourite author, Dan Brown. The Da Vinci Code is one of a series of books with the same main character - Rober Langdon, a Harvard professor of symbology. The character is drawn into a murder investigation in France, in which he is the main suspect. (Don't worry - we find out quite early in the book that he is not guilty!) To clear his name he must solve a series of clues and puzzles that have been left by the victim. This is a favourite because, "you are always wondering what will happen next, you just want to read the next chapter...It really gets you thinking, and questioning...From the minute go - I was invested."

### **Mr Walters Box to Box by Curtis Woodhouse**



Mr Walters chose Curtis Woodhouse's autobiography as his recommended read. A local sporting idol (born in Beverley no less) explores how he started off his professional football career at a young age. He made his debut at Sheffield United at the age of 17, and by the age of 20 he was transferred to Birmingham City for £1 million. He played for a variety of football teams (even Hull City) but when he was 25 he decided to be a boxer. Curtis worked hard to fulfil his dream and put a lot of effort into his new career. This clearly paid off, as with a lot of hard work and resilience he became British Champion at the age of 32. This was an enormous achievement, as when he first started boxing he was ranked the worst in Great Britain! "This book just shows that with hard work and determination you can achieve your goals."





**Mrs Morris**  
**How the Grinch Stole Christmas! By Dr Seuss**

As Christmas is Mrs Morris' favourite time of the year, it made sense that this would be the book that she recommended. The story is about the mean old grinch who hatched a plan to steal Christmas from the Whos down in Whoville. His plot does not go to plan, and Mr Grinch finds out that Christmas is less about the presents under the tree and more about who is celebrating with you. "This is a book about friendship and love."



**Mr Kay**  
**The Two of Me by Andrew Johns**

Mr Kay's recommended read is an autobiography of one of his idols – Australian Rugby League player Andrew Johns. Johns is now considered to be one of the most successful rugby players to play the game, despite the fact that he was not necessarily the fastest, or most skillful, or the strongest. Not only did he apply himself and set himself the highest possible targets, he refused to accept that anything would stop him. "The message is quite clear – once you have set yourself a goal, as long as you apply yourself and refuse to let setbacks get in your way, you can get where you want to go."





# T EACHING AND LEARNING STAR AWARD



The second term of this academic year has been uniquely challenging. A no notice lockdown and school closure has forced all of us to rapidly upskill to teach online and differentiate like champions when teaching in the building. I am incredibly proud of our remote provision offer and our drive to deliver face to face teaching to the vulnerable and key worker students in the building. As a team, the academy have pulled together to overcome the barriers our pupils face learning at home and we have continually driven up attendance and engagement online. I am extremely grateful to you all for your continued hardwork and drive which has ensured our students receive a high-quality education regardless of the challenging circumstance.

This half term I would like to recognise someone that continually goes above and beyond for her students. Her relentless positivity and hard work explain why the attendance to her live lessons is outstanding. The winner of this half term's award for teaching and learning is:  
**Jen Palmer.**



Jen is a lead teacher in English who supports with CPD across the academy. Here are some of the reasons Jen is our teaching and learning star this half term:

1. Jen always asks what she can do to help others, she sees the art of teaching as a team effort, one which is strengthened through collaboration.
2. Jen persistently chases students who do not attend online, showing that she cares about their outcomes and emphasising the importance of education and English. This has secured excellent attendance to her online sessions.
3. Jen volunteered her time to support with the whole school literacy teaching and learning CPD, providing support and guidance to other lead teachers and curriculum directors. Jen used her experience and significant wider reading to support improvements in literacy teaching.
4. Jen pro-actively looks for opportunities to make reading opportunities high profile for pupils, recognising this as one of the most effective methods for improving attainment in pupils across the academy.
5. Jen provides support to staff as one of our fully trained coaches in our coaching programme. Jen is a friendly and supportive person, helping people to develop areas of teaching they ask for support with.
6. Jen develops and delivers CPD within the English team to introduce educational research to the team.
7. Jen proactively supports her department by covering their lessons with high quality teaching during any periods of absence.
8. Jen is a literacy champion, modelling excellent practice for literacy teaching and marking within her books.

I am incredibly grateful to Jen for everything she continues to do every day for teaching and learning and to support our pupils and staff across the academy.



# VISION, VALUES AND PRIORITIES

Sirius Academy West, where every child achieves and believes in success. Our fully inclusive school nurtures high aspirations and respect and removes all barriers to learning to enable all students to reach their potential and become productive citizens in our community.

## **Our Values**

We are guided by our 6 core values of RESPECT. Our staff explicitly model our values in everything they do.

1. Respect for yourself
2. Respect for each other
3. Respect for the environment
4. Respect for the community
5. Respect for education
6. Respect for the future

## **Our Curriculum Principles**

To achieve our vision we are guided by the following curriculum principles known as “the 5B’s”

1. Broad and Balanced
2. Built on Firm Foundations
3. Barriers to learning removed
4. Beyond the classroom
5. Bold and Brave – The Best

## **Our Teaching and Learning Priorities 2020-21**

To ensure effective implementation of our curriculum and achieve excellence in teaching and learning, our 3 CPD areas of focus to drive us to be the best are:

1. Literacy
2. Securing Learning in Long Term Memory
3. Removing Barriers to Learning

**We need to remain focussed on the Academy priorities and to remind ourselves regularly of our vision – where we’re moving to as a team**

# THE LAST WORD



GET THE LAST



WORD

## The last word

Training as a Biomedical Scientist, although rewarding, I personally did not want to pursue this career any further. So, I handed in my resignation, and began my career in teaching. My passion for teaching first arose when completing the Biology in Education module at University. In all honesty, I was surprised by how much I enjoyed teaching. Seeing young people making choices that affected them later in adulthood, made me reconsider my own career and motivated me to get involved at a stage where I could try to influence our students to have high aspirations. Our students, more often than not, use setbacks as a motive to aim for second best. Thus, my philosophy centred on teaching our students, it is okay to be confident, ambitious and have big dreams. Anything less, would be a disservice to themselves. Why do I teach? It's simple, I care about the future of young people from Hull.

**If you'd like to have The Last Word in next term's Sirius T&L Magazine please email Abbey Preece**





