

Oaklands Junior School

ACHIEVING THINKING SCHOOLS ACCREDITATION

Introduction

At Oaklands Junior School we encourage all members of our community (pupils, parents, staff and governors) to share our vision of Learning to Think and Thinking to Learn which is based on a high quality teaching and learning environment for all. We think deeply about our work, reflectively, critically and creatively, and spend time discussing the best ways to develop a meaningful and purposeful curriculum, drawing on a wide range of learning opportunities. We are committed to our own learning, keeping up-to-date with research, as well as learning from other schools and each other. We are open to new ideas and are prepared to take risks which we consider carefully before deciding whether they will usefully contribute to our vision of becoming a Thinking School.

Aims and Objectives

At Oaklands Junior School we aim to:

- teach our pupils a range of strategies and tools in order to promote their thinking.
- use a common language of learning so that the children will recognise and feel confident in every year group to eventually be able to use these tools and strategies independently, both in school and in life beyond Oaklands Junior School.
- encourage all members of our community to interact with and show consideration for each other, in such a way as to enable the positive psychological wellbeing of both pupils and staff to flourish.
- encourage our pupils to work co-operatively, collaboratively and independently to generate high levels of achievement and an excitement and enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

Planning and Delivery

We deliver this using a number of tools for thinking:

1. Philosophy for Children (P4C)

This was originally developed by Matthew Lipman, an American professor, as a tool that would develop pupils' thinking and reasoning skills. Once given a question for enquiry, exploration or debate, or a stimulus such as a picture to promote discussion, the children then use this to create their own enquiry. This was the first tool we introduced and the idea is that there are no right or wrong answers, as the skill is in sharing ideas and thoughts that are backed up by reasoning, reflecting on what others may have to contribute and then committing to a final answer. Every response is

valued. This encourages all children to take part, developing self-esteem, as well as developing pupils' questioning skills and learning through discussion. It is ok for pupils to change their minds on what they originally thought, once they have heard what others have to say and this is part of their learning. It is collaborative (thinking with others); caring (thinking of others); critical (making reasoned judgements); and creative (creating new ideas).

Pupils are encouraged to seek out answers to philosophical questions, ones that involve important ideas about which people can have different views. Neither pupils nor teachers know what the outcome will be, which makes the process exciting. Pupils hold each other accountable for good reasoning, agreeing and disagreeing with each other without being disagreeable.

The teacher acts as a facilitator to keep the discussion focused and pushes for greater depth of thinking; but while a typical classroom discussion is a series of questions and answers mediated by a teacher who is already an authority on the subject, in P4C the participants often create their own enquiry to search for answers that they find plausible and well supported. We develop pupils' thinking through the common language of learning, using the process of: Think, Commit, Justify and Reflect.

P4C develops thinking that is critical, using reasoned moves to build arguments; collaborative, with the sharing and challenging of ideas; creative in the willingness to speculate, take risks and imagine; and caring, because everything is set up to foster consideration and respect for one another.

2. Thinking Maps

Visual tools are a really important way to allow people to organise and present their thoughts. We have adopted David Hyerle's Thinking Maps®; a series of maps used to develop eight fundamental thought processes. Our pupils learn about these different processes and how the maps can be used to represent them. The aim is for pupils to become independent users of these maps, selecting the correct tool for what they want to do, developing their ideas and using them as planning tools across the curriculum and as a way of recording their thoughts and ideas.

A total of eight maps are used and as our pupils become more confident in their use, they will identify which one will help them in their thinking. The idea is to teach our pupils about all these different maps and their use, but then, as they become more experienced, getting them to think about the purpose, rather than the name of the Thinking Map. Knowing the purpose of each map will encourage independent selection, showing that knowledge of these maps and their use, are embedded as part of their learning:

- Circle Map: defining in context;
- Bubble map: describing attributes;
- Double Bubble Map: comparing and contrasting;
- Tree Map: classification;
- Brace Map: identifying part of a whole;
- Flow Map: sequencing;
- Multi-flow Map: cause and effect;
- Bridge Map: seeing analogies.

3. Write from the Beginning

From September 2014, we have introduced our third thinking tool: ‘Write from the Beginning’ which is a carefully structured developmental writing programme which focuses on using existing knowledge and understanding of David Hyerle’s Thinking Maps® to implement a unique, rigorous and targeted school-wide approach to the development of pupils’ writing.

The six key criteria for successful writing are identified and continually extended as pupils develop from ‘Emergent Writers’ in the Early Years to ‘Engaging and Extending Writers’ in Upper Key Stage 2. The initial training given to staff focused on narrative, personal recount and imaginative forms of writing.

Thinking Families

At Oaklands, we want to give our pupils opportunities to put these tools and strategies into practice both within the classroom but also in other environments, working with a greater range of people on tasks that both challenge and inspire their thinking. Each pupil becomes a member of a Thinking Family – these are named after colours – and they stay in that family throughout their time with us. Each family includes pupils from every class, so there will always be two pupils from each of the year groups, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6, with a mix of gender. In these families, once each term, we will have a series of activities that each family will have to work together collaboratively to solve; this year we have had Democracy Day, the Christmas Story and Brain and Body Day. These sessions last from an hour to a whole day, with staff placed strategically on different activities and the families being entrusted to work together collaboratively, moving on to the next activity when told to do so. On another day each term, we have a Family Feast, which means that each Thinking Family has a chance to eat lunch in their family group.

Think Tank

Children who have been recognised as excelling in their thinking by thinking more deeply or asking higher order questions are nominated by class teachers at any time during the term, with a certificate and a star badge being awarded in our celebration assembly on Mondays. These are generally presented by the Thinking Schools leader.

Becoming a Thinking School

We are on the road to becoming a Thinking School but we want to ensure that we embed tools thoroughly. We have now introduced three tools, P4C (Philosophy for Children), Thinking Maps and, most recently, Write from the Beginning. Each tool takes approximately one year to fully embed and all three tools must be fully embedded before we can apply for accreditation. It is important that every member of staff is confident in their use across the curriculum, including any new members of staff who join us; so to this end there will be a series of staff training sessions for teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that we develop our skills and ensure that we are all using the same language of learning. Information evenings for parents and presentations to governors will ensure that our whole school community is involved in our vision. Currently we are working on developing links between our ~~new~~ primary curriculum and opportunities for developing thinking, as well as opportunities for

being creative, also using our outdoor learning environment. It is important that thinking is at the core of everything we do, encouraging pupils to develop their thinking, becoming more confident to take risks and knowing that their opinions and views will be valued, as they develop the skills to be able to justify their thoughts and be reflective on the thoughts of others.

Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment within a Thinking School context includes not only judgements made on pupils' performance within lessons but also upon the impact that becoming a Thinking School has made on pupils' overall achievement whilst at Oaklands Junior School.

The assessment of pupils' Thinking skills may take place in any area of the curriculum and is likely to include the:

- language of learning being used when pupils talk about Thinking Schools and the tools being used.
- broader depth of pupils' thinking, witnessed within lessons: class discussions, group or individual responses and P4C sessions.
- use of Thinking Maps with pupils identifying the purpose of each one and their use within context.
- annual MALS (Myself as A Learner Scale) tests which measure pupils' confidence in their ability as learners.
- Regular review and updating of MA&T register.

The above will then feed into the Senior Leadership Team's view of the impact of Thinking Schools, whilst also taking account of the following during lesson observations:

- lesson plans to include higher level questioning.
- analysis of the type of questions that pupils are being asked and the type of questions that they are asking.
- discussion with pupils.
- scrutiny of written work.

Review of Document

This policy will be reviewed annually by our Thinking Schools leader, shared with staff and our link governor.

Reviewed by Curriculum Committee: June 2017

Next Review: Summer 2018

Related Documents:

- Best Value Policy
- Most Able & Talented Policy
- All Subject Policies

Thinking Schools Document Revised June 2017

- Assessment for Learning Policy