



Welcome

Welcome to our penultimate Teaching and Learning Newsletter of the year. I do hope that you are finding them useful and, as always, please do contact me here at school if you have any questions or points that you would like to raise. The focus of this newsletter is on supporting boys' achievement and I am grateful to Rachel Dell for writing the article below to help guide our thinking on this issue.

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Assistant Headteacher

Supporting our Boys

There has been a worrying trend over the last 15 years that girls are outperforming boys. At GCSE, 2016 saw an 8.9% gap between the achievement of girls and boys, a pattern repeated in further and higher education also. Gary Wilson (please see website below) has been working on raising boys' achievement for many years and has identified a number of barriers to boys' achievement including a lack of independence prior to starting school, difficulties in structuring written work and a lack of opportunities for reflection.

Peer pressure is often cited as one of the biggest reasons for boys orientating away from education and as such Wilson argues that it is vital for boys to be able to achieve away from the 'prying eyes of their peers'. This could be in the form of helping younger students at school, or siblings at home with home learning, reading or organising their own projects for example. By giving boys a positive focus for their natural leadership ability, it can be a means of allowing boys to succeed and challenge gender stereotyping. A common misconception is that boys love competition: In fact, boys who win, love competition. It seems more accurate to say that boys love challenge, an idea which is being embodied across the school with changes to students' working practice such as flipped and independent learning. This also creates an opportunity for perhaps the biggest motivator: Rewards. We like to receive praise, yet on average boys will hear more negative comments compared to words of encouragement. Wilson argues that setting short-term goals that are recognised and rewarded, are a successful strategy for raising boys' engagement with work and subsequent achievement. Some further practical ideas for supporting your son include:

- Be active in their education
- Develop their independence – don't do everything for them
- Get good male role models

You can visit his website for more information

<https://www.garywilsonraisingboysachievement.com/>

From Your Year Leader

During the last half term you will have received your student's most recent report and had the parents evening. Thank you so much for all the help and support that you offer your children and the school with these events and I hope that you found it helpful and informative.

Girls often outperform boys in the GCSE and A Level exams and, therefore, we have identified that this is something that needs to be challenged from Key Stage 3. The school is looking into methods to engage boys in the curriculum and any support from you to encourage your children to meet their potential in each of their subjects and on each piece of work will be invaluable. Checking their home learning and communicating with their teachers for different strategies will be highly effective as well as asking them about what they have coming up. Boys need to be confident to talk about what they enjoy but also their struggles and what they find difficult. Opening these channels now will be a great start before looking into options next year.

Sports Presentation Evening takes place on 26th April where we will be celebrating the successes of the students who have participated in sports events throughout the year and I am sure many Year 8 students will be involved in this event. I would also like to congratulate the group of dancers who helped with our Easter liturgy and encourage more students to get involved in all areas of the school. Year 8 continue to demonstrate their abilities across the curriculum and are an asset to the school. They have set the bar high and now need to continue with this.

Mike Wood—Year Leader

PE

In this half term all of years 7, 8 and 9 will be moving over into summer activities. This will mean that the teaching focus will move towards Athletics, Rounders and Tennis. The areas that will be taught within these sports will be the rules and regulations and key skills/ techniques that enable the students to be able to complete the activity. Once confidence is gained in the key skills they will be challenged to perform more advanced skills and perform them within a competitive situation. Within the competitive they will be discussing and developing knowledge of tactics and how to implement these within the game.

To run alongside the curriculum changes we will also be changing our after school extra-curricular programme. The clubs after school will match the curriculum changes, meaning that there will be an Athletics, Softball and Rounders club with the tennis courts open to use Monday through to Friday. These clubs are open for all to attend, and the timetable will be going up on the website and around school soon.

Drama

This half term the texts and themes across KS3 have been carefully selected to engage boys, nurture a love for the subject and close the attainment gap. Students will be asked to research their chosen theme and/or to learn their lines for their scripted performance for their home learning tasks.

'Let Him Have it'

Devise polished improvisations based around the case of Derek Bentley. Students will play different characters involved and perform court scene. We will focus closely on how Stanislavski's 'system' can be used to build a believable character. The main assessment period will be from 1-11th May.

Art

Students have been exploring the theme of Portraiture, they have made portraits of themselves and each other. They have studied a range of Portraits from different periods of Art. They are studying the work of Picasso and responding to his use of the two-view portrait. Students will have the opportunity to work in 3-D next term.

Music

Students will be learning the history of blues music and exploring well known conventions in the genre, including 12 bar blues, blues scale and improvising.

To help support and engage boys in the above topics, the majority of classroom time will be learning by doing and working with others to concrete knowledge and embed ideas. The practical work will involve working on drum kits and percussion, keyboards, as well as music technology to record and edit compositions.

Year	Topic Title	Main Assessment Task
Graphics	Crazy Creature Hats	Design and make final project
Resistant Materials	Festivals of Light: Mood Light	Design and make final project
Food and Nutrition	Come cook with me	Carbohydrates and Nutrients
Textiles	Crazy Creature Hats	Design and make final product
English	Childhood/WW2	Unit assessment - AQA style – Paper 1 and writing
Maths	Angles, Perimeter, area and volume, Ratio and Proportion and sequence	End of Unit assessment
PSHE	Planning for the future including financial planning. Introduction to Careers website which parents can also log in (see letters on website for instructions). www.starfish.com	
RE	Who killed Jesus?	End of unit assessment
Geography	Population pressures	Examination based on this and previous topics
History	<i>The French Revolution</i>	<i>"Taxation was the most important cause of the French Revolution" How far do you agree?</i>
Science	Forces Pressure and density	<i>Written tests completed in class for all topics listed using past KS3 science questions</i>
MFL	French – My talents and hobbies German – My free time and going out	Listening, Reading & translation – teacher assessed

Additional Home Learning Activities

If the Home Learning does not take the full time allocated, students should try one of the activities below

Improve the quality of their written work by:

- Completing all Graft/feedback activities
- Adding to/developing core information by researching it and writing it into their books
- Correct spelling errors and punctuation

Consolidate/learn a topic by:

- Creating a spider diagram/mind map of key information
- Summarising key information into a single paragraph
- Creating a key word list with definitions
- Creating some revision/cue cards
- Writing some questions with answers to capture key information
- Writing an extended answer on the topic being studied
- Turn the key information into a model or drawing

Take the learning further by:

- Researching a related person, event, idea on the internet (e.g. BBC Bitesize) or in the library that is relevant to your topic
- Watching a documentary/programme on Youtube or other platforms
- Listening to a podcast/audio download or using the new GCSE Pod
- Talking to a class friend/family member about the topic to discuss key ideas

The problem with our Monkey Brain



During the week in which 'Living a Health Life' was the theme, all students from Years 7 to 11 were introduced to ways in which they can look after their nervous systems. They learned the neuroscience behind making impulsive decisions, their emotions, anxiety and how these can impact on learning and the enjoyment of healthy positive relationships. Most importantly they were given a toolkit that can be used to 'Tame the Monkey Brain.' Tutors will be working with students to put some of these techniques into practice and, for years 10 and 11, to use specific ones that help them address exam anxiety

Located in the temporal lobe of the brain, **the amygdala** helps trigger the fight-or-flight response.

Buzzle.com

The Impact of the Monkey Brain

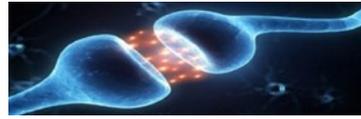
- ▶ Impossible to slow down and enjoy the present.
- ▶ Negativity affects our mood—making us unhappy, angry, restless, and anxious.
- ▶ It hampers our ability to concentrate.
- ▶ It has a negative impact on our behaviour
- ▶ It interferes with our ability to have positive interactions with others.

Know that you can tame it

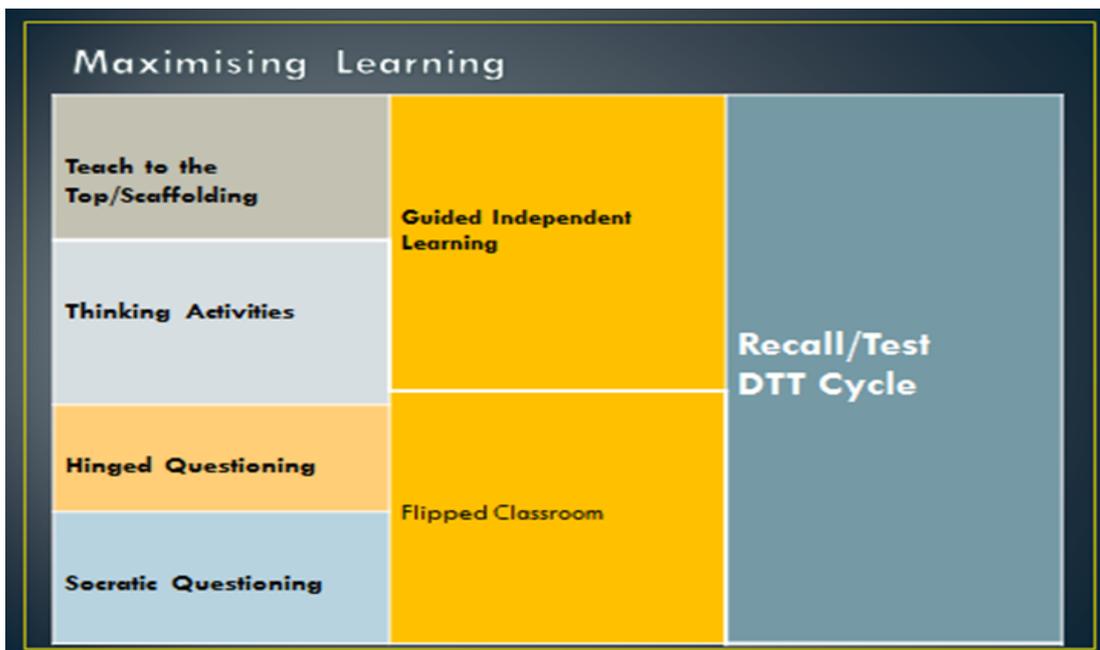
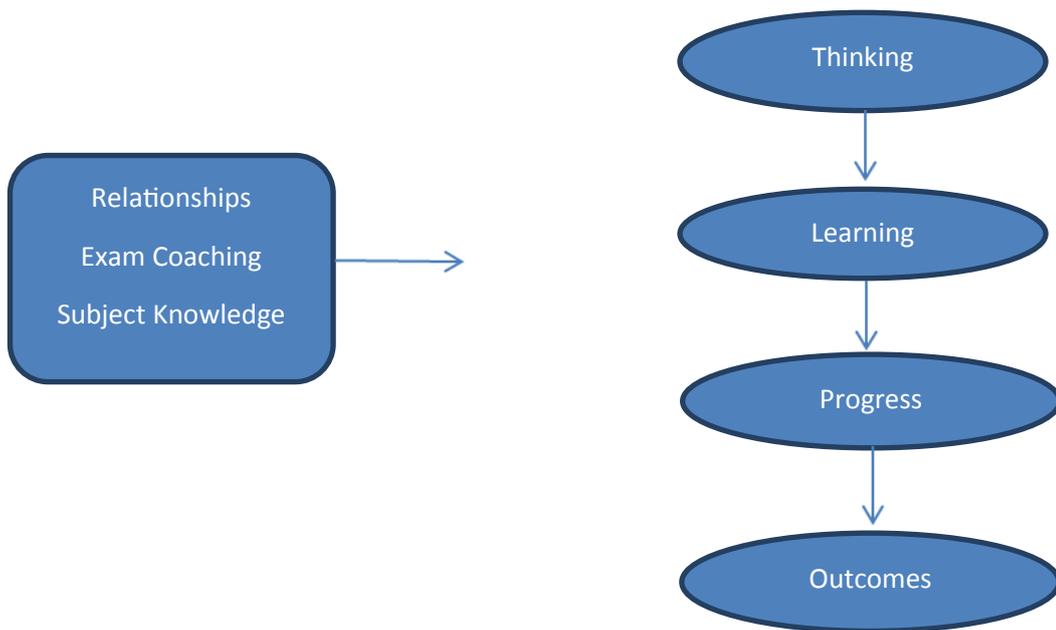
How to tame your Monkey Mind

- Talk to Your Monkey Mind
- Establish a Journaling Practice
- Meditate
- Practice the A-B-C Technique
- Stop Assigning Meaning
- Recite a Mantra
- Play a Game of Fives
- Engage Your Mind
- Try Piko-Piko Breathing

Teaching and Learning



From September 2017, staff have been taking part in a 2 year plan that involves receiving training in and implementing strategies across all key stages to encourage highly effective independent learning in students. The aim is to encourage a love of learning whilst equipping students with a toolkit to maximise their learning and improve their personal outcomes. It is based on the Psychology of Learning where laying down neural pathways is essential so that students can 'master rather than acquire' knowledge and improve their recall.



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