Aylsham High School

It takes a Whole Community to Educate a Child

Learning Together For Excellence



A Framework for Excellence

Summary Document for Parents

THE AYLSHAM CLUSTER TRUST

Our Unchanging Priorities

- Quality assurance of teaching and learning and performance development of teachers and support staff
- Supporting students' learning and student leadership of learning
- Assessment for learning, differentiated challenge, tracking and effective intervention
- Curriculum and independent learning
- Collaborative partnerships and leadership for learning

Key Values – Co-operative Values

Aylsham High School is part of the Aylsham Learning Federation with Bure Valley School, John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School and part of The Aylsham Cluster Trust (TACT). TACT has chosen to adopt a Co-operative Trust model. We have done this because we believe that the greatest energy for change and development comes from within our own communities.

Our work is underpinned by the Co-operative values:

- Self – help- we help people to help themselves
- Self – responsibility- we take responsibility for, and answer to our actions
- Democracy- we give our members a say in the way we run our organisation
- Equality- we are genuinely inclusive and pursue success for everyone
- Equity- we carry out our work in a way that is fair and unbiased
- Solidarity- we share interests and common purposes with our members and other co-operatives

Our ethical values are:

- Openness- nobody's perfect, and we will not hide it when we are not
- Honesty- we are honest about what we do and the way we do it
- Social responsibility- we encourage people to take responsibility for their own community, and work together to improve it
- Caring for others- we are a nurturing community that takes care of each other and we regularly support charities and local community groups

Introduction

This document highlights the key guiding principles that we are using to help shape the future of Aylsham High School over the next four to five years. Each year we will look to build on and develop how we put these guiding principles into practice in our classrooms and across the school. We will stick to these guiding principles. We feel strongly that they are principles that hold true whatever the changes to the national policy agenda which, as we know, changes often.

In order to help shape and form the thinking that lies beneath the guiding principles in this framework we have undertaken extensive reading of both educational books, educational research and blogs. It is important to stress that no one book, piece of research, blog or individual has provided us with a 'silver bullet' for school improvement. That would be most misguided. There are no silver bullets in education. Instead, we have attempted to arrive at a well-reasoned and researched way forward for Aylsham High School over the next four to five years. We hope that the direction of travel is clear and resonates well with parents, and students alike. Staff and governors have already been working with the guiding principles through their professional development and monitoring work.

This framework is divided into six key areas of development. These areas are directly linked to our unchanging priorities for school improvement and are focused on improving learning. For each area we outline the principles that we are to follow as a school community if we are to be able to move forward effectively together and to be able to have a deep and lasting impact upon the learning that our students and families experience day-to-day. These principles form the underpinning of our continued professional development (CPD) programme and any action research work we undertake. None of it is about overnight solutions. Real, lasting improvement takes time, effort, and determination to achieve.

At the heart of everything lies the school culture that we want to create, and the sort of classrooms we want to see. Crucially everything hinges on ensuring that teaching is highly effective and that learning is as powerful as it can possibly be. Great teachers, supported by a strong wider staff, engaged parents and governors, transform learning and change lives. Students and teachers can only thrive if they work within a culture that allows them to do so. A culture where they feel safe and well cared for. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that we continue to build upon the excellent foundations we have already laid in order to create something that will truly stand the test of time and give our students the best possible start in life.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that our *Framework for Excellence* is translated from vision into reality so that we can continue learning together for excellence and so that we can continue helping our students to become happy, confident, and successful adults.

Warmest regards



Duncan Spalding

1. Our guiding principles in further strengthening our ethos and school culture

We will place the thinking around a 'growth mindset' at the heart of what we do and look to apply its principles consistently. We believe everyone can get better through hard work and deliberate practice.

We will seek to praise students for their hard work and application and always emphasise the possible and the concept of "... not yet" instead of "I can't". This will include relishing challenge and the concept of 'desirable difficulties'.

We will avoid focusing praise on talent or ability. Doing this can cause children to become risk averse and fearful of failure. We will need to look at the vocabulary that we employ as an organisation. We need to talk about higher starters or the more of less confident learners rather than in terms of ability. This will take time as habits are hard to change.

Where relevant and practical, we will use redrafting and the pursuit of quality/beauty before we move on to a new task. This will help deepen learning and understanding.

We will ensure that any reward system we have focuses on celebrating the work and the effort that has gone in and does not merely reward basic expectations. We must encourage students to see that self-esteem comes from the work they do, either in class, through extra-curricular activity or out in the wider community.

We will work to re-imagine and reinforce family learning to help parents understand the value of a 'growth mindset', the value of core knowledge as a foundation for successful learning, and the importance of deliberate practice.

We will work to provide more in terms of support for parents in order for them to be able to support their child's learning. Part of this will involve the development of parental learning courses.

We will build still further on our excellent alumni work. This will help us to be able to demonstrate the power of an Aylsham High School education to help youngsters succeed and to help them access relevant, well-informed and impartial advice and guidance.

Our inter-house competitions will be redeveloped and revitalised to help champion the work we wish to celebrate above all and to ensure it is woven into the fabric of school life.

2. Our guiding principles in curriculum design and assessment for learning

We will place knowledge at the heart of everything we do. Knowing what and knowing how will be of paramount importance.

Our curriculum will balance the teaching of traditional academic subjects with a strong focus on the arts, sport, enterprise and opportunities for applied learning.

We will focus our curriculum development on three key elements of knowledge in each subject, what we know as The Trivium:

- Essential core knowledge
- Application of knowledge, experimentation and structured practice
- Creative expression of knowledge

We will look to provide core knowledge upfront as a package to students and parents via the school website. We hope parents will help students to practise this regularly. We know that regular, spaced practice helps develop memory, improve learning and reduce forgetting.

Our assessment will feature regular low-stakes testing to help reduce forgetting and embed core knowledge. Increased spacing of the intervals between tests will also help reduce forgetting and embed core knowledge.

Our assessment system will be designed to mirror the three areas outlined above and be linked to mastery of core knowledge, application of knowledge and independent creative expression.

Our inter-house system will place a great emphasis on learning essential knowledge and on rewarding wider participation in key areas underpinning learning e.g. Inter-house mastermind with specialist subjects in key curriculum areas and general knowledge round from all curriculum areas. The following list is for illustration and by no means exhaustive:

- Inter-house spelling bee
- Inter-house maths/tables/mental maths challenge
- Inter-house speaking contest
- Inter-house sports
- Inter-house creative writing challenge
- Inter-house poetry/drama by rote challenge
- Inter-house enterprise challenge
- Inter-house programming challenge
- Inter-house hobbies exhibition

We will ensure homework is re-imagined to echo the demands of the development of core knowledge, the application of knowledge, and the creative expression of knowledge i.e. there will be a blended focus on core knowledge development (learning for low stakes tests), structured practice and more open-ended and creative tasks.

We will look to support our less confident learners to ensure they have grasped core knowledge before the use of open-ended homework and tests which demand application of knowledge. We want to ensure that they can experience success.

Our subject captains will be used to help develop these areas of the curriculum (core knowledge, the application of knowledge, the creative expression of knowledge) through clubs and support work.

Our house and tutor system will continue to be used to encourage challenges and the testing of core knowledge to help embed it.

We will work with trust colleagues to develop a system for how we can support the core knowledge development process as early as possible.

We will continue to examine and scrutinise our current Key Stage 4 structure to ensure that it offers our students the best opportunities for success particularly in the light of new EBacc and progress 8 measures. We will seek to retain our current breadth and diversity of offer whilst balancing it with the needs of our students.

We will ensure that we are able to offer a traditional academic curriculum alongside a wide range of other exciting, enriching and challenging options.

3. Our guiding principles for how we will continue to develop teaching and learning

We will ensure that the importance of embedding core knowledge is reinforced in our teaching culture.

We will re-emphasise the importance of the power of high quality direct instruction followed by clear and challenging worked examples to students' learning.

We will be even more proactive in how we maintain high levels of teacher credibility, by continuing to make sure that every lesson counts.

We will arrive at agreed methods within subjects to explain difficult abstract concepts in order


Teaching for Learning
Expert Teaching
Focused on Learning
Explicit Knowledge
Focused on Communication
Rigour & Challenge
Curriculum & Assessment
Cultural Capital
Breadth, Depth & Balance
Academic & Creative
The Trivium
Trips, Visits, Extra-Curricular
Personal Development, Behaviour & Wellbeing
Responsibility
Self-Discipline
Honesty, Care & Kindness
Politeness
Safety
Leadership for Learning
Trust & Collaboration
Shared Leadership
Dialogue & Critical Friendship
Shared Accountability
Student Leadership
Partnerships & Community
Sharing Expertise
Equity, Equality & Diversity
Family Learning
Celebrating Success
Making a Contribution
Ethos & School Culture
Growth Mindset
Respect for Yourself
Respect for Others
Respect for the Environment
High Aspirations
AHS
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to help students avoid common misconceptions as this will help us reduce within school variation between classes and improve outcomes for all students.

We will achieve the above by re-designing our subject department meetings to have a greater focus on instructional quality by teachers using modelling, deliberate practice, immediate feedback and re-practice.

We will re-design our departmental meetings to ensure that as well as deliberate practice they make greater space for reviewing schemes of learning and collaborative future planning.

We will explore making greater use of video technology to be able to create genuine examples of modelled instruction for self-reflection/research purposes and to support students with their homework.

Our CPD work will engage with and explore the educational research to help us to be able to engage knowledgeably with research and use it to improve our practice and students' learning.

We will all undertake to insist on students developing full sentence answers orally in order to help our students structure their learning responses and in recognition of the fact that we are all teachers of language and communication.

We will ensure that the oral and written responses we demand at KS3 exemplify the kind of responses we want for GCSE and beyond by teaching students how to structure their writing

using agreed frameworks. Confident learners will begin then to use these frameworks creatively earlier in their school career.

We will focus as a school on the concept of transferability of knowledge between subjects and problems. It is the hardest thing to make happen. We will ensure that we provide lots of signalled opportunities for students to transfer their knowledge to different contexts, in order to help them to become better at something that is inherently difficult. We will explore both the surface and deep structure of problems.

We will re-evaluate our use of less structured group or "discovery" tasks especially with students whose core knowledge grasp is weaker. We will develop agreed conventions and guidance on group and independent work to avoid students time being spent reinforcing rather than challenging misconceptions.

The coaching model is having great impact on professional development and will be extended and developed as a means to support teacher development and improvement.

We will look to make increased use of peer observation and review in our performance development work not just at classroom level but also between middle leaders such as heads of department and heads of house.

4. Our guiding principles for how we will continue to strengthen personal development, behaviour and well-being

We will strive to ensure that our behaviour for learning continues to be outstanding through a maintained vigilance in this area.

We will develop our monitoring of behaviour for learning through providing additional support for our heads of house to maintain a close partnership with home.

We will develop and build upon our use of 100% compliance rules and the use of "least invasive" behaviour management techniques such as visual cues, non-verbal signals and non-confrontational strategies from *Teach Like a Champion*.

We will further develop our use of structural routines to help colleagues work with all groups e.g. clear entry routines, silent focused starters ('now tasks') and clear classroom expectations. We will never underestimate the beginnings of lessons as the key moment to set the tone for learning.

We will all reaffirm our commitment to high visibility at changeover times when we are not

teaching to support our colleagues even further. We will also continue to carry out our staff duties to a high standard during unstructured times for students. It is this consistent focus that maintains great learning cultures.

In our teams we will commit to visiting and supporting all colleagues, especially new colleagues, supply colleagues and cover supervisors when we know a class teacher is absent. We already have great practice but even more support could help transform learning still further.

We will make more use of peer observation to help us to reflect on our own behaviour management strategies and to help support colleagues.

We will continue to build on excellent student leadership to help us drive the culture of excellent behaviour we have in school.

We will further develop student leadership through enhanced training for groups such as:

- Friendly Faces
- Peacemakers
- Prefects
- Peer mentors
- Sports leaders
- PESTs (Parents Evening Support Team)
- Subject captains

We will review our rewards and sanctions systems to ensure they have greater clarity for students, staff and parents.

We will continue to work closely with outside agencies to help us intervene early and find effective solutions to behavioural issues.



5. Our guiding principles for how we will continue to develop leadership for learning

We will revisit our planning and self-review frameworks to help provide senior and middle leaders with an even clearer framework for working and to ensure highly effective line management work and the ability to make 'agile' leadership decisions.

We will continue to review our schedule of meetings to ensure it is delivering what we need to help colleagues improve teaching and learning. This will include a renewed focus on developing middle leadership through high quality CPD and senior leadership team support.

We will have colleagues contribute to a good practice briefing once a fortnight to help share excellent practice amongst colleagues.

Through our teaching and learning team we will develop sharing practice via social media and blogs as well as face to face. This will help to deepen further the impact of our CPD around pedagogy and curriculum.

It is seen as a real positive move to have greater wider staff contributions at governors' meetings so this practice will be continued and developed to ensure that our governors are able to support and challenge more deeply.

Colleagues have valued the governors' visits and thus far they been a positive and valuable experience. We will continue to develop these so that colleagues are all given equal opportunity to meet and interact with governors.

We will develop wider opportunities for colleagues to lead work across the Aylsham Cluster Trust, and the ALF Federation as well as across the county.

We will encourage teacher and leadership colleagues to explore opportunities to work as Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) to deepen their own professional knowledge and understanding.

We will continue to focus on the development of student leadership because it continues to prove transformational to the work that we do across the school.



6. Our guiding principles for how we will continue to develop our collaborative partnerships and explore future developments

We will continue to work with a wide range of strategic partners. Our work as part of The Aylsham Cluster Trust (TACT) remains our most crucial collaboration to the long-term success and sustainability of all Aylsham schools.

We will explore our capacity in TACT to collaborate more deeply on curriculum and teaching and learning as it is likely to have the greatest impact on outcomes for TACT pupils.

We will work hard to ensure that the Aylsham Learning Federation with Bure Valley School and John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery school, helps all schools to improve and helps our students to thrive and develop a real sustained love of learning.

We will seek to provide shared services for our trust partners, which could help deliver more sustainable leadership and help heads to focus on teaching and learning.

We will explore opportunities for Aylsham High colleagues to support other Norfolk schools. Doing so will help us to reflect on our own work more critically.

We will encourage middle and senior leaders to explore opportunities to become Specialist Leaders in Education as it will help us to develop our own practice and challenge our own thinking.

We will explore the potential for the development of our 11-16 provision in the light of the new housing developments in Aylsham.

We will continue the phenomenal teacher development work that we already do, such as our CPD programmes and in-house coaching, delivering the Even Better Teacher Programme.



Some Wider Reading

Books

Bennett, Tom (2013) *Teacher Proof*, Oxford UK, Routledge

Berger, Ron (2003) *An Ethic of Excellence*, Portsmouth NH, Heinemann

Christodoulu, Daisy (2013) *Seven Myths About Education* (Kindle edition), London, The Curriculum Centre

Dweck, Dr Carol S (2006) *Mindset*, 2012 paperback edition, London, Robinson

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Hattie, John (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers*, Oxford UK, Routledge

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Ripley, Amanda (2013) *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got That Way*, New York, Simon & Schuster

Robinson, Martin (2013) *Trivium 21c*, Carmarthen, Independent Thinking Press

Rogers, Bill (1995) *Behaviour Management*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing

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Wiliam, Dylan (2011) *Embedded Formative Assessment*, Bloomington IN, Solution Tree Press

Willingham, Daniel T. (2009) *Why Don't Students Like School?*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass

Articles

Bjork, R. A. (2013). Desirable difficulties perspective on learning. In H. Pashler (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the mind*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Reference.

Birnbaum, M., Kornell, N., Bjork, E. L., & Bjork, R. A. (2013). Why interleaving enhances inductive learning: The role of discrimination and retrieval. *Memory & Cognition*.

Hays, M. J., Kornell, N., & Bjork, R. A. (2013). When and why a failed test potentiates the effectiveness of subsequent study. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, Cognition*.

Bloggers & Tweeters

@A_weatherall Science blogger

@davidfawcett27 – Very reflective teacher and PE specialist

@headguruteacher- Prolific blogger on all things education

@HFletcherwood- History blogger. Innovative thinker.

@HuntingEnglish- English and SLT thinker

@informed_edu- CPD blogger and CEO of National Teacher Enquiry Network

@joe_kirby – English Teacher and very thought provoking blogger on teaching and learning

@johntomsett – York Headteacher blogger. Inspirational leader and teacher.

@kevbartle – SLT leading CPD at an Outstanding London school.

@learningspy – Provocative teacher and blogger with a specialism in English and literacy

@LeadingLearner – North West Executive Head & thoughtful blogger

@miss_mcinerney – Former Teach First, Fulbright Scholar and excellent blogger.

@samfr – Former special advisor to Michael Gove now at TF. Produces weekly Ed blog round-

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