

The Highbury Grove School Framework for Teaching and Learning

Philosophical underpinning

1. Our School Motto: *“per ardua ad astra”*. *Through hard work to the stars.*

‘To the stars’: Our rich curriculum enables all of our students to draw inspiration from the best that has been thought, said and done; to experience awe and wonder at the cultural and physical world that surrounds them; to embrace the intrinsic rewards of achievement and the joy of learning for its own sake .

Our motto informs our commitment to have extremely high aspirations for all of our students. We are conscious of the power of high expectations – the so-called ‘Pygmalion Effect’ and the Ethic of Excellence as exemplified by Ron Berger’s ‘Austin’s Butterfly’. We do not accept mediocrity; we set ambitious goals for all students regardless of their background or prior attainment believing that they are capable of achieving excellence if we show them the steps.

It also informs our insistence on high levels of endeavour, commitment and determination from all students. We expect them to work hard at school and at home; we expect them to find solutions to their difficulties and to take responsibility for their actions and for their learning, whatever their personal circumstances.

2. ‘Philosopher Kids’ from Martin Robinson, author *Trivium 21st C.*

Martin’s work provides a source of inspiration. The concept of *Philosopher Kids* captures the aspirations we have for all young people at Highbury Grove School.

“At Highbury Grove we believe that children need to feel they are on an adventure in the pursuit of wisdom through which they develop as lovers of learning in all its rich variety. We believe in the importance of knowing, exploring and communicating; we believe in building a strong community where every member of the school bears responsibility for the strength of our institution.

Plato talked about the need for Philosopher Kings and Queens; at Highbury Grove we wish to enable our pupils to become ‘Philosopher Kids’.

Philosopher Kids are curious to know, question, and they can lead as well as follow. Philosopher Kids like to feel, to think, and are notable for their eloquence and ability to take part in the ‘great conversation’ through which they make a contribution to our common life.

Philosopher Kids engage thoughtfully in dialogue and argument, they appreciate and make beautiful things, they are confident when grappling with difficult ideas, they love music and also seek out space for quiet reflection and contemplation.

We challenge all our pupils to become cultural polymaths, true ‘renaissance people,’ able to flourish both as individuals as well as realise that they have an important role to play in enabling their family, friends and community to flourish as well.”

Philosopher Kids: know; explore; communicate.

Trivium 21stC: A framework for constructing our curriculum and pedagogy

The Trivium of Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric, formed the basis of a classical education from ancient Greece up to Shakespeare's time at school and beyond. In the 21st Century, it remains a powerful framework for formulating ideas about learning, the curriculum and pedagogy. At Highbury Grove, we have embraced these ideas to guide and inspire us in all that we do.

Martin Robinson has written these short sketches of the key concepts for us:

Grammar: Knowledge, Skills, tradition, authority, discipline, hierarchy, the 'culture', what makes this art unique? The relationship between the 'master' and her apprentice is central with the teacher as expert and the pupil as needing to know. The body of knowledge: the 'best' that has been thought, said and done. Connecting ideas, the importance of the whole narrative, and also how the subject connects with others, beyond its own confines...

Dialectic: Exploration, critical thinking, analysis, philosophical enquiry, thought, reasoning, creative, scientific and mathematical thinking, encouraging dialogue, debate, argument, questioning, the individual pupil gradually coming into view and finding themselves flourishing through practice and self-discipline. Humour, wit and playfulness. Authentic experience.

Rhetoric: Communication, turning outwards to the world, persuasion, product, performance, community, relationships, caring, love, responsibility. Writing, speech, challenge to exist and 'be' in a public space, giving of yourself to others. Parenting, leading, emotionally controlled and mature, thoughtful, empathetic, - ethos, pathos and logos.

In practice this means that we actively seek to create the conditions in our schemes of learning and lesson planning where the Trivium comes alive with more familiar associations for communication with students and parents:

Grammar = Knowledge

- The direct transmission of knowledge and explicit teacher instruction.
- Retention and recall: teaching for memory; learning by heart; low stakes testing; knowledge for its own sake; repetition and practice.
- Explicit teaching to build cultural capital; explicit teaching of subject-specific terminology and the skill of reading different texts.

Dialectic = Exploration

- Opportunities to debate, question and challenge
- Opportunities for hands-on authentic experience and experimentation
- Opportunities for enquiry, analysis, critical evaluation and problem solving

Rhetoric = Communication

- A strong emphasis on structured speech events to share and debate ideas with others.
- Opportunities to perform, to make things and to showcase the products of learning
- Opportunities to contribute to the discourse about the values shared in the school and the wider community.

From 90 Lessons, A Review of Teaching and Learning at HGS

At our best, these are the features of excellent lessons at Highbury Grove:

Behaviour and Relationships

Over and above the Behaviour for Learning system, there is a strongly positive rapport between teacher and students; teachers model kindness, conspicuous warmth and promote a sense of being 'in it together'. Teachers use the BfL system effectively to secure excellent behaviour, often pre-empting issues and preventing escalation to higher level sanctions by assertive, firm early intervention.

Teachers teaching

In the best lessons, teachers' expert subject knowledge is used as a key resource. Students' confidence in their teacher is evident. Effective teachers give clear explanations, going beyond the basics as needed, re-explaining in different ways to secure better understanding, adjusting the questions in response to students' level of accuracy and confidence.

Creating an environment where hard work is normal

This is done effectively in many areas with teachers using time cues for tasks – (count-down clocks on the IWB are commonly used) and the expectations for the work completion rate are made clear. The selective use of silence (real silence) and individual working are part of the mix.

Top End Challenge

In the best lessons, high level challenge is beyond doubt: teachers use probing questioning techniques; base lessons on rigorous material; maintain high expectations of extended verbal answers exploring the depth of understanding or process; students are never left waiting or forced to grind through questions they can do easily; they have options. Set-piece opportunities for student input/ co-teaching/ coaching/ peer support are part of the mix of a lesson sequence; students are trusted to deliver inputs with expectations set high and planning time given.

Selective use of group work

Any effective group activity is structured so that there are group goals and individual responsibilities within the groups. There is a reason for students to be working together – sharing ideas, creating products or presentations, sharing equipment.

Clear Learning Objectives

The most effective lessons have a clear learning purpose; it is clear what concepts and ideas the tasks are designed to explore. Importantly, Learning Objectives are articulated and explored not merely presented via PowerPoint or copied down.

Learning for memory as well as for understanding

The process of learning for long-term memory is explored explicitly; simple techniques requiring students to recall facts and explanations from memory are routine. Synoptic and interleaved elements are woven into lessons eg as starters or in tests.

Homework or Guided Study

Homework is a planned part of the flow of lessons, not tacked on and the arrangements and expectations for homework are given due weight and time. Students have the resources for independent study; they could go home and continue their learning.

Marking and feedback

The best practice includes sensible sustainable routines with a clear focus on actionable improvements. Marking frequency is not the key factor; it is selective marking that generates a response that has the greatest impact. Peer and self-assessment opportunities are part of the routine – eg with marking in class, application of mark schemes to essays or samples of writing. In all of these cases a focus on wrong answers and improvements generates effective learning and progress.

Well-presented books and efficient workflow

Where the practice appears most effective, books indicate clear systems that teachers enforce: presentation is excellent, corrections are made, worksheets are stuck in, redrafting is evident and teachers use the assessment records to follow up on missed or sub-standard work.

Literacy

Reading is given high status. Material presented in the lesson is read aloud and explored for meaning as part of the learning of the subject content.

Talk at whole class level or in pairs is used as a precursor for writing with answers rehearsed and extended verbally. Expectations of the quality of verbal responses are high; low level answers are challenged, speech errors are corrected and mediocrity is not accepted.

Various structures to ensure full participation are deployed including the use of randomisation methods so that all students prepare to share contributions – even if not everyone can answer each question.

SEN

Teachers know who the students are with particular identified needs and have put the action plans into effect. Teaching Assistants with clear roles and briefs to support individuals support learning effectively – rather than simply being present, scanning and supporting in an ad hoc manner. It is good to see some LSAs given opportunities to teach small groups or the whole class at certain points. Expectations of SEN/Nurture students are very high.

Teaching and Learning Priorities for 2015-16

a) **Behaviour for Learning**

Embedding the system, raising standards of behaviour so that lesson disruption is eliminated and students' raise their level of self-discipline, personal responsibility, capacity to work hard and to listen to others.

b) **Speaking:** structured speech events and routines

Developing planned opportunities in all areas where students develop their fluency and confidence with spoken English. This combine set-piece activities such as recitations, speeches and debates with organic in-class approaches to questioning and discussion that require extended verbal answers as a matter of routine.

c) **Literacy:** explicit teaching of reading, writing and subject specific language

Developing opportunities for students to read a range of texts; taking time to teach the vocabulary and syntax relevant to specific subjects explicitly; using talk for writing as a strategy to improve written answers.

d) **Feedback** policy and practice; making feedback count, closing the gap

Developing a consistent approach to marking and feedback that builds in the necessity for students to respond to feedback thereby securing improvement – ie 'closing the gap'. This includes making corrections during directed improvement time in lessons and opportunities for re-drafting key pieces of work.

e) **Explicit knowledge:** what should be known; how it should be learned

Developing a stronger understanding amongst teachers and students of the key knowledge associated with each area of learning so that this can be explicitly taught. This links to developing strategies for memory and recall including low-stakes micro-tests and approaches to interleaving, building students' confidence with recalling and applying knowledge and their capacity to perform well in terminal exams.

f) **Assignments:**

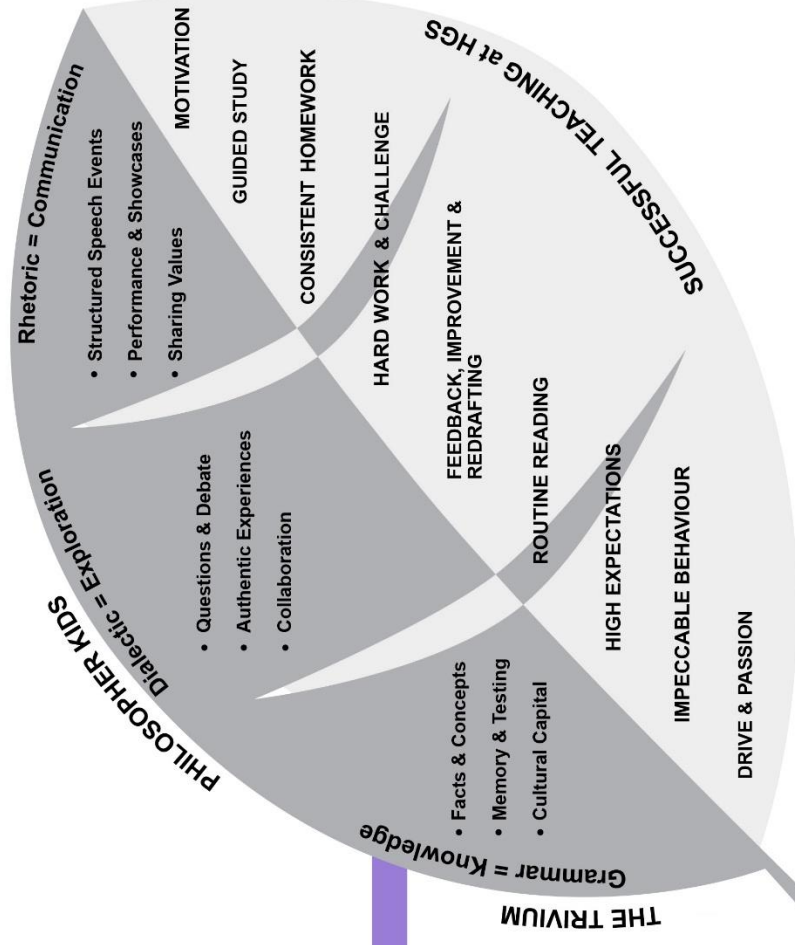
We will develop assignments to define our expectations of the learning to be completed within a unit of work. These should embed high level challenge for all, indicate the progression path for students and inform teachers' assessment judgements and subsequent interventions. Assignments should also inform guided study and home learning as we seek to develop students' capacity for independent study.

The Highbury Grove Learner

A student working group generated the following students' view of the key characteristics of a successful learner at HGS:

- Confident to take risks
- Accepting of others
- Articulate
- Patient and kind
- Possesses a broad range of interests
- Resilient
- Open-minded
- Desires academic success
- Ambitious and determined

HGS - TEACHING & LEARNING - 2015/16



Per Ardua Ad Astra

The Characteristics of a Successful Learner (Student Voice):

Confident to take risks	Articulate	Possesses a broad range of interests	Desires academic success
Accepting of others	Patient & kind	Resilient	Ambitious & determined
		Open-minded	

