

2017/18

Steps to Success in Senior Leadership

# Challenge in the Classroom and the Impact of Personalised Learning on Progress – developed through the BEST Teaching School

## Context : Rationale : Aims

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017, my School was subject to a Section 8 (converted to a Section 5) OFSTED inspection. We received the full report some weeks later with 'Good' judgements in all areas.

The following extracts are taken from the report's 'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment' section:

- Where learning is most effective, teachers make work particularly challenging for pupils.
- In some subjects the strengths identified are consistently present in all teaching. Across the curriculum, they are not always evident. Where teaching is not as strong pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

Having carefully considered the report I became intrigued by what the inspectors considered to be 'challenge' and indeed the lack of it. I was also interested to establish how and why this affected pupil progress and what could be done to change the learning environment for students.

My project would establish what challenge meant to all stake holders (students, teachers, leaders). Upon this I would ascertain how challenge could be enhanced or better identified, develop staff awareness and application and then seek to identify how the changes could improve outcomes.

	Pupils	Actual results			Pupil progress			
		Attainment 18 (Overall)	% English & Maths (Grade 4+)	% Ebacc (Grade 4+)	Progress 8 (Overall)	% English & Maths (Grade 4+)	% Ebacc (Grade 4+)	
<b>Summary</b>	All Pupils	305	4.7	69% ↘	17%	+0.00	+4%	-6%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	166	4.6	62% ↘	13%	-0.12	-0%	-5%
	Female	139	4.8	77% ↘	22%	+0.14	+8%	-6%
<b>Prior Attainment</b>	Higher attainers	97	6.0	95%	36%	-0.08 ↘	+1%	-11%
	Middle attainers	110	4.7	78%	14%	+0.08	+7%	-4%
	Lower attainers	91	3.2	30%	1%	-0.00	+3%	-2%

The whole school data for subjects outside of maths and English (Ebacc) showed a lack of progress for all groups. When considering that greater challenge improves progress I found that students and staff both agree on the methods in which challenge can be delivered. Problem solving and independent learning were critical for all.

Department Leaders gave these statements:

"Teachers pushing students' boundaries of understanding will make them learn more effectively."

"The work is pitched at a level which the students can understand but which pushes their knowledge further."

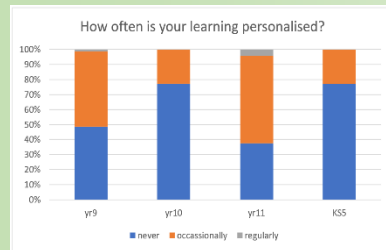
This early research allowed me to put in place 6 core principals for delivering challenge in the classroom.

- Examples of 'challenge' you can try:
- high level questioning (to push you beyond your comfort zone)
  - problem solving – applying skills learnt to a specific task
  - linking the topic to real world scenario
  - giving you different work to that of your peer (if they have a different target)
  - independent learning – where you are given the resources to find answers and solutions yourself
  - flipped learning – evidence of independent learning of topic before formal teaching

## Actions : Impact

Having set in place the 6 proposals for challenge I investigated their application through a series of learning walks, noting where the challenge was applied and where there were missed opportunities. Whilst challenge was identified in all lessons there was a significant omission of personalised learning. As learning was not being personalised enough, any application of challenge is irrelevant. One student's perception of challenge will never be the same as another's - if they have different starting points.

At this point my project and focus shifted to the precise idea of **personalised learning (PL)**. I would spend the next period conducting research, training and developing the next steps to imbed personalised learning into all lessons.

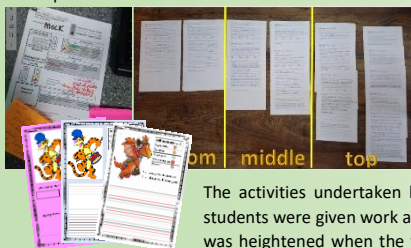


Students, via surveying, did not consider personalised learning existed routinely in their curriculum. Indeed 50% of each year group said "never". Team Reviews, through which departmental improvement occurs, identified differentiation as being strong and consistent yet considered 'students choosing their own work' or 'applying intervention as soon as possible' as being evidence of such. Both these examples would not consider the students starting points and risked them undertaking work below their target and thus preventing progress.

It is vital to compare data and classroom practice not only within a school but between schools. **Denbigh High School** in Luton, for example, performs better than us for progress. The effective use of personalised learning there allowed teachers to apply AFL to formulate prior attainment and next steps such that each lesson had a significant element of personalised learning. Students in observed classes at Denbigh were far more likely to have work different to their peers due to their different starting points and targets.

Through research and planning, I delivered a CPD session to a selected group of teachers. This aimed to explain personalised learning and strategies for implementing it in our lessons. Over the following weeks methods were enacted and information passed on and our awareness of different techniques provide clear evidence of the impact personalised learning can have.

Examples of research undertaken:



	grade achieved	average
9d1	3 48 45 42 45 48 45	46
no support	4 45 38 45 52 48 52 52 45	47
	5 58 55 55	56
	6	58
9a2 and 9p1	3 42 45 48 45 48 52 48 52	48
purple pen	4 55 52 48 48 55 55 48 52 55 45 52 55	52
	5 55 58 48 55 55 52 55 52 55 58 52	54
	6 55 52	54
9g3	3	44
full diff sheets	4 38 42 42 52 48 38	43
	5 48 55 52 48 42 52 55	50
	6 58	58

The activities undertaken by myself and my colleagues indicated clearly that when students were given work applied to their prior attainment they performed better. This was heightened when the work was based on an initial assessment or AFL and when students were given specific tasks from the outset.

The activities were having a real and measurable effect on one year 11 cohort's NEA task. It was clearly observed that for all key stages (evidence collated for KS2,3 and 4) personalised learning derived from AFL was a significant contributor to progress within the lesson and, therein, progress over time. Due to the short timescale and wide scope of the investigation, it was not possible to achieve direct outcomes. Instead the project focussed heavily on research, implementation and feedback. The outcomes were used to formulate the next steps for the school – applied via consideration of CPD and the school Improvement Plan.

## Next Steps : Personal Gains

### Challenges

- Establishing to what extent personalised learning happens.
- Ensuring teachers know the best method of PL.
- Making sure that students are aware of their next steps.
- Controlling workload, to reduce planning or resources for PL.
- Engaging staff in CPD and having clear and explicit expectations.
- Reducing the variation in CPD to achieve school priorities.
- Providing enough CPD time to embedded practice.

### Opportunities

- Students can identify their progress within lessons.
- A growing sense that the learning is specific to the individual.
- Progress measures improve, thus lifting attainment.
- Teachers know their students better and make improvements to lessons and schemes of work accordingly.
- Learners are able to identify their own next steps to making progress.
- Intervention during the lesson due to lack of understanding will be less common, if AFL is applied to set the learning.
- Observations can explore personalised learning provision.

Proposal for School Improvement Plan:	
Success Criteria	Action Required/Milestones
All lessons have an element of Personalised Learning, where students undertake work according to their own targets, prior attainment and ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPD input to inform of outcomes of this report and the methods that are effective. Delivered through September INSET.</li> <li>• Robust PM targets linked to PL.</li> <li>• Learning walks throughout Autumn and Spring terms</li> <li>• Team Reviews to reference PL specifically</li> <li>• AH leading T&amp;L and/or HLP to lead on PL for all students</li> </ul>

CPD should be planned on the content of the above proposal, focussing on: use of seating plans, application of AFL, differentiated resources, extension for HLP. Delivery, monitoring and outcomes of the application of PL should be linked to a specific leadership team function such as the AHT responsible for T&L.

This project has been an invaluable opportunity to explore the workings of school improvement. I was in a unique position: returning for a year and therefore not a part of the 'establishment'. This allowed me to look carefully at all aspects of the school and reach the conclusions and recommendations outlined in an 18-page report. It was an honour and privilege to lead on this and I hope my findings drive future improvement.