



## Teaching and Learning Policy: Willowbrook School

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Next review	December 2022

Approved at the Full Governing Body meeting:

10<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### Intent

Our school vision statement is: *"To provide a transformative educational experience that is based on deep knowledge, nurturing relationships and personal responsibility."* Our approaches to teaching and learning are underpinned by this vision. High-quality teaching is the main mechanism through which we can ensure that the children who attend our school are able to fulfil their full potential as learners and as well-rounded citizens. High quality teaching is also critical in terms of enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve well\*.

### Climate

Effective teaching relies heavily on the school climate in which staff operate. The Education Endowment Fund's 'Guide to Implementation' explains this clearly:

*"School leaders play a central role in improving education practices through high-quality implementation. They actively support and manage the overall planning, resourcing, delivery, monitoring, and refining of an implementation process."*

*In addition to these practical roles, they also create a school climate that is conducive to change. Implementation is easier when staff feel trusted to try new things and make mistakes, safe in the knowledge that they will be supported with high quality resources, training, and encouragement to try again and keep improving. In such supportive contexts, leaders develop a sense of enthusiasm, trust, and openness to change."*

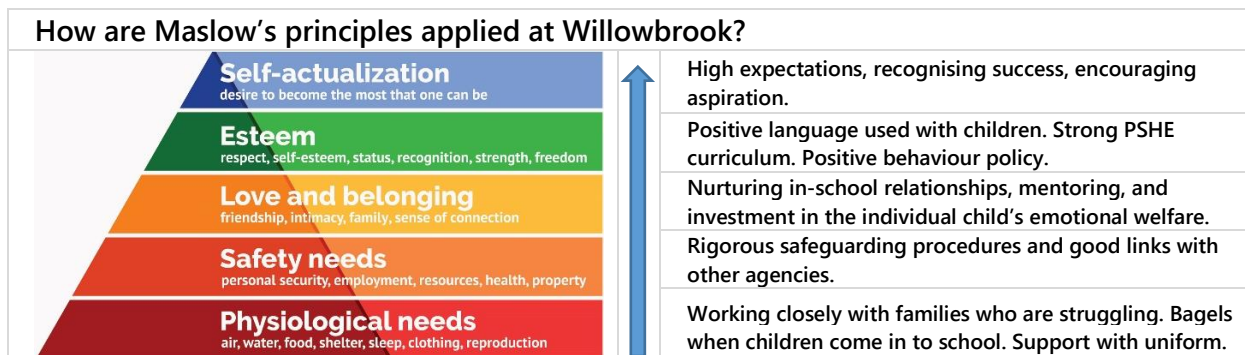
At Willowbrook School, we want our teachers to be able to try new things, make mistakes and effectively evaluate their own practice.

### Behaviour, Self-regulation and Nurturing Relationships

The EEF report *Improving Behaviour in Schools* describes the ramifications of poor behaviour in schools. At Willowbrook, we understand that high-quality teaching incorporates excellent behaviour management. We use evidence-informed approaches to ensure that good behaviour is discretely taught so that good habits and routines become second-nature for the children. We create learning environments which are calm, orderly and enable children to concentrate. Our focus on routines is heavily guided by Sherrington and Caviglioli's *Teaching Walkthrus*, which draws upon work from many practitioners including Bill Rogers.

*\*EEF Pupil Premium Guidance: "great teaching and careful planning can make a huge impact on the outcomes of disadvantaged children."*

Just like adults, children perform best when they feel safe and secure. Maslow (1943) suggested that in order for humans to be highly motivated, certain needs must be met. An understanding of Maslow's model underpins teaching at Willowbrook School:



If children are to be successful learners, they need to be taught how to self-regulate. Our behaviour policy explores this in greater depth, but at Willowbrook School we work hard to develop pupils' emotional literacy so that they can articulate their concerns/anxieties before these feelings escalate into dysregulated behaviour. The EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that Metacognition and Self-Regulation approaches can have a +7 month impact on pupil outcomes.

#### Research-informed CPD

We believe that the teaching at Willowbrook School should be informed by evidence and 'best bets' about what works in the classroom. We draw upon guidance from the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, as well as other influences such as:

- Willingham's Why Don't Students Like School?
- Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve (1885)
- Bjork's desirable difficulties (spacing, retrieval practice)
- Shirley Clarke's formative assessment
- NCETM's mastery guidelines
- Christodoulou's Seven Myths about Education
- Sherrington and Caviglioli's Teaching Walkthrus

There are three main mechanisms through which these evidence-informed approaches are shared with staff at Willowbrook School:

1. CPD training sessions  
Each half-term, high-quality CPD is delivered by the leaders in the school, drawing upon an evidence-informed text. This is shared within mixed-age teaching teams where we look at specific ideas and how they apply to our individual contexts. Time is provided for reading, discussion and reflection. Within the sessions, teachers identify areas from the training they will apply in the classroom.
2. Incremental Coaching  
Every teacher at Willowbrook School has an Incremental Coach. This leader will work with them across a year. This process is as follows:



The Ambition Institute has written a report about effective Incremental Coaching and how it can be used in schools. It explains that *“Incremental coaching is a form of teacher development based on an approach to observation and follow-up conversations advocated in Leverage Leadership by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. We commissioned research that suggests it is a practical way for middle and senior leaders to improve the effectiveness of teachers.”* Our leaders’ approaches are based on the model described in this report.

### 3. Collaborative Enquiry

In the EEF Implementation Guidance report, it is suggested that schools *“Complement expert coaching and mentoring with structured peer-to-peer collaboration”*.

Collaborative Enquiry is a peer-to-peer approach where teachers work together to address an issue/challenge related to teaching and learning. Teachers have the opportunity to observe one another’s practice and have meaningful dialogue about what they see. The report is clear that the success of this approach is dependent on there being clear objectives, structured content/processes and a tight focus on improving pupil outcomes. Therefore, Collaborative Enquiry is a heavily-scaffolded approach overseen by Senior Leaders at Willowbrook School.

All three of these processes are key to improving the quality of teaching and Willowbrook School. The focus of all activities is always tightly linked to the school’s Improvement Plan. These approaches are also adapted and used with Teaching Assistants.

#### Planning (Knowledge-Rich and Mastery-Based)

It is critical that teachers plan effectively. Well-prepared lessons ensure that every learner’s needs is considered and that potential misconceptions are anticipated in advance. Good preparation also helps to support successful behaviour.

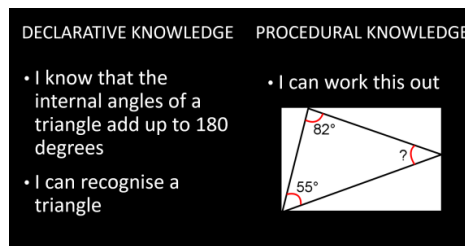
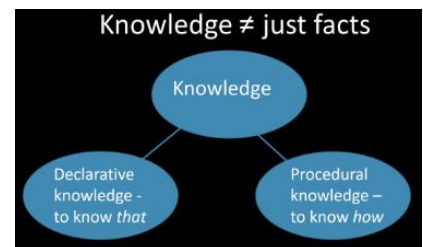
At Willowbrook School, we expect teachers to focus their energies on *how* they will deliver curriculum content, rather than on having to select the content itself. Curriculum content is pre-prepared by Senior Leaders and subject-specialists to ensure that our children engage with consistent, well thought-out content over time.

The curriculum at Willowbrook can be described as ‘Knowledge Rich’. Clare Sealy (who has written and spoken extensively on this topic) talks about how a rich understanding of a concept enables ‘meaning-making’ to take place:

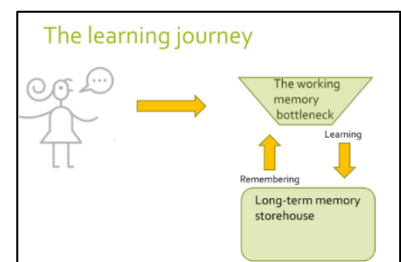
*"If education is to be meaningful it needs to result in something deep and durable that lasts beyond the moment. There is nothing wrong with fleeting pleasures or momentary joys but these are not what learning is. To learn something is to be changed in some way that that lasts beyond the immediate... Learning enables us to see the world in a new way. Whereas before we only saw trees, now we see elms, oaks and sycamores. Whereas before we only saw rocks, we now see granite, limestone and sandstone. Whereas before we only saw shopping, we now see profit, loss and externalities. Whereas once we saw 'one bad apple', now we see the historical roots of deeply institutionalised patterns of injustice. As we learn to 'see' in new ways, our very selves are changed."*

A knowledge-rich approach to teaching is also proven to be beneficial for those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hirsch, 2016). At Willowbrook School, we want our children to access a rich body of knowledge from us directly, as we know that we cannot rely on every child having this kind of access outside of school.

Knowledge is personally enriching but its value is also well-justified with reference to cognitive Science. Clare Sealy is clear that knowledge is not just about unconnected facts (see diagram) but is made up of both declarative and procedural knowledge. These two types of knowledge, often referred to as 'knowledge and skills' are two sides of the same coin; you can't do one without the other (see image below).



What we know from Cognitive Science is that working memory is limited in terms of how many pieces of information it can contain/use at any one time. The more knowledge that can be deeply learned and understood (stored in our long-term memory) the more capacity our working memory has to solve problems, reason and think in sophisticated ways. At Willowbrook School, many of our approaches are underpinned by a belief that learning certain information to automaticity reduces pupils' cognitive load and allows them to engage more successfully with the wider curriculum.



Strategies to support automaticity include:

- **Early Bird Maths**  
At the start of each day, every child in years 1-6 completes 'Early Bird maths' questions. This daily work on arithmetic helps children to retain basic strategies they will be expected to use regularly in Maths.
- **Daily Dictation**  
Every child in years 1-6 completes a daily dictation task. These dictations have been

carefully designed to incorporate age-related spellings and grammar that we want the children to use confidently in all writing.

- **Retrieval Practice**  
Across the whole curriculum our teachers use retrieval techniques. We know from Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve (1885) that as soon as something is learned, we begin to forget. Retrieval is about interrupting this forgetting process. This may take the form of low-stakes quizzes at the start of lessons, for example.

The EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that 'Mastery Learning' can lead to up to +5 months progress. Mastery approaches, often discussed within the context of Mathematics, are summarised by the EEF as follows:

*"Mastery learning keeps learning outcomes constant but varies the time needed for pupils to become proficient or competent at these objective. Mastery learning breaks subject matter and learning content into units with clearly specified objectives which are pursued until they are achieved. Learners work through each block of content in a series of sequential steps and must demonstrate a high level of success on tests, typically about 80%, before progressing to the next unit. Those who do not reach the required level are provided with additional tuition, peer support, small group discussions, or homework, so that they can reach the expected level."*

For Mathematics, we use the White Rose scheme which applies this understanding well. However, our teachers have had extensive Maths Mastery training and are confident to use their professional judgement about how they use these materials. For example, they may choose to use alternative representations than White Rose suggests, or to break up the learning-journey into a slightly different order than is outlined in the scheme.

At Willowbrook School, we apply the ideas of Mastery in other curriculum areas. We believe that all children deserve to access the age-appropriate content, and that we may need to adapt what we do to enable that to happen. Our teachers have a strong understanding of the principles of effective visual design. This enables them to ensure that resources used effectively support all learners, but particularly those with additional needs.

#### Effective use of Feedback and Assessment Data

In the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit, feedback is shown to have the potential to have the most significant impact on pupil outcomes in comparison to other strategies/approaches there is evidence for. Nevertheless, the EEF is clear that feedback can be counter-productive when done badly, *"Feedback studies tend to show very high effects on learning. However, it also has a very high range of effects and some studies show that feedback can have negative effects and make things worse."* Dylan Wiliam (2019)\* offers some clear guidance that we apply at Willowbrook School:

- **Keep Purpose in Mind**  
Children need to know specifically what they're aiming for and why. The focus should be more on the student than the work itself.

\*<http://projects.ias.edu/pcmi/hstp/sum2019/morning/rop/TheSecretofEffectiveFeedbackEducationalLeadership.pdf>

- **Give Feedback They Can Use**  
Feedback must be genuinely useful and something the children can actually act upon. It is vital that the feedback addresses where the child is now, rather than focusing purely on the intended outcome.
- **Assign Tasks That Illuminate Students' Thinking**  
Probing tasks and questions should enable teachers to illuminate misconceptions and difficulties. This then enables the teacher to give timely and precise explanations/feedback about the issue at hand.
- **Make Feedback Into Detective Work**  
Feedback should lead to children having to think and engage. Students must do as much work as the teacher (if not more!). For example, a teacher might say "there's a piece of punctuation missing in this paragraph. Can you find where?" rather than simply correcting the mistake on behalf of the child.
- **Build Students' Capacity for Self-Assessment**  
We want pupils to develop the ability to reflect on their own work/learning in a critical way. Therefore, feedback should sometimes be more about challenging questions that help to build these reflective qualities. E.g. "What do you think would make this a better piece of writing?"
- **A Trusting Relationship for Feedback**  
For a pupil to respond well to feedback, they must trust their teacher, believe their teacher knows best and that the teacher has their interests at heart.

### Monitoring the Quality of Teaching

At Willowbrook School, we dedicate time to monitoring standards. This enables leaders of all levels to establish whether the intended outcomes of teaching approaches are being achieved. Monitoring of standards is carried out through a wide range of activities:

- **Standards and Progress Meetings (SPMs)**  
SPMs are meetings held in phases that focus on standards in a particular subject. The meeting is facilitated by a senior leader and is based around a set of probing questions linked to the subject in hand. This format develops a sense of collective responsibility amongst each team for the children in their care. Best practice is shared and actions are agreed about any tweaks that may be needed moving forward.
- **Pupil conversations**  
Talking to children about their learning is an effective way of seeing what they have learned. Senior leaders and subject leaders regularly carry-out such conversations. The conversations lead to actions that we can take to improve the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the curriculum implementation.
- **Book scrutinies**  
Looking at pupils' work is another key way we monitor the quality of teaching. If children are being taught well, then their work will demonstrate an increasing understanding of key concepts. Children will take pride in their work and will be able

to use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary to explain their understanding.

- Lesson observation

Hattie (2008) makes the point in *Visible Learning* that teachers need to be continually aware of the impact they are having on their students and use this to inform what they do. Thus, when observing, there is a real benefit in focusing on the pupils' perspective: are they engaging successfully with what is being taught? We know that 'seeing' learning is difficult – so we have to look for indicators that it might be happening. Daniel Willingham says that memory is the “residue of thought”. Therefore, when observing, we need to critically evaluate whether the approaches being used are likely to lead to a change in pupils' long-term memory. Some questions we would consider:

*Are children engaging thoughtfully?*

*Do they offer accurate explanations of the concept being taught?*

*Do they understand what they need to do?*

*Can they explain why they are doing what they are doing?*

*Are they able to reflect on their work, learn from mistakes and offer suggestions for improvement?*

Teachers deserve and need effective feedback about their practice. After observing, we always ensure there is a reflective dialogic conversation between the observer and the teacher, with any agreed actions captured.

- Analysis of Assessment Data

Assessment data is another important indicator of the quality of teaching. Termly standardised assessments in Mathematics and Reading help us to analyse the attainment and progress of every year group. Through analysis of this data, we look at pupils' progress over time (compared with their prior attainment at the previous key stage) as well as progress in-year. We identify any key groups who might be underperforming and unpick the reasons for this. These conversations, carried out with teachers, then help to inform priorities in the term ahead. For Writing, we use comparative judgement as an assessment approach (proven to be more reliable than traditional moderation approaches). The data produced from comparative judgement tasks also enable us to provide targeted support where it is needed. Other fluency checks for Mathematics and Reading are also used during the year to help teachers to unpick gaps in pupils 'basic' skills.

## Policy Summary

This policy has outlined how Willowbrook School ensures:

- ✓ A safe and professional working climate for its staff
- ✓ A safe, orderly and calm environment for the children
- ✓ That staff have access to evidence-informed CPD
- ✓ That planning is knowledge-rich and based on mastery approaches
- ✓ That feedback and Assessment data are both used in a timely and effective way

This combination of factors means that the children at Willowbrook School receive what we believe they are all entitled to: an incredibly high standard of education.