



The Challenge Academy Trust

Excellence In Teaching and Learning Policy

SERVE CHALLENGE EMPOWER

Document Control

Member Academies:

Appleton Thorn Primary School
Beamont Collegiate Academy
Bridgewater High School
Broomfields Junior School
Dallam Community Primary School
Great Sankey Primary School
Meadowside Community Primary and Nursery School
Padgate Academy
Penketh High School
Penketh South Primary School
Priestley College
Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School
South Wirral High School
The Sutton Academy

Version	Date	Action

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TCAT Lead	VB

This policy is a Trust-wide policy and applies without exception to all staff, students, trustees and governors who attend or work at all academies in the Trust or in the central Trust structure.



The Challenge Academy Trust – Excellence In Teaching and Learning Policy

The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) is dedicated to providing an exceptional education that inspires and challenges all our young people to achieve their full potential from when they start with us in the EYFS all the way through to Post 16-Education. Our excellence in teaching and learning policy is designed to reflect the trust's commitment to educational excellence, commitment to evidence based research and endeavour to ensure that every learner is equipped with the knowledge and skills, and character needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Purpose and Rationale

At TCAT, we believe in the transformative power of education. We aim to nurture well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also possess the character and resilience to navigate life's challenges successfully. Our goal is to equip them all with the tools they need to adapt to an ever-evolving work and to lead fulfilling lives.

The TCAT Teaching and Learning Strategy is aligned with TCAT's three core principles of collaboration, challenge and continuous professional development.

Collaboration within teaching and learning is based upon recognising that whilst there is not one-size-fits-all approach to developing expert teaching, having a set of teaching principles allows each school to develop their own approach to this through these principles. The principles are designed to be applicable to all schools within the trust, no matter their phase of education. Teacher educators within each school can capitalise on the principles to develop approaches to teacher development in their context, whilst also contributing to the wider mission of developing expert teachers within TCAT.

Challenge requires professionals to be working towards a set of common goals. Whilst it is not easy to define what makes expert teaching, having a set of common principles allows teachers and leaders at all levels to challenge each other to improve and develop classroom practice so that pupils make progress. The principles are not designed to be an accountability framework but to frame professional development and conversation about what we believe expert teaching to be within our trust and the context of each school.

Continuous Professional Development is at the heart of what we believe about empowering our staff to be the best that they can be to have impact on the pupils that we teach. The TCAT teaching principles are designed to define what expert teaching looks like and to allow leaders to design professional development modules to support implementation of the principles in the classroom. These modules can be both generic to all phases of education or specific to key stages, phases or subjects.

1. Vision and Values

- Our vision is to ignite a passion for learning in every student, nurturing their curiosity and empowering them to become lifelong learners who contribute positively to society. We aim to provide an excellent modern education that inspires, challenges and supports learning to excel in learning and in life.
- We value integrity, respect, and excellence. We are committed to providing an inclusive environment that respects the diversity of our community and promotes fairness and equality. Together we embrace accountability, foster innovation and provide equality of opportunity.

2. Teaching and Learning Principles

- Guided by the work of the **EEF, the Great Teacher Toolkit and Rosenshine's Principles of Effective Instruction, this policy should be read alongside the TCAT Learns document and other relevant documentation from each individual academy's approaches to Teaching and Learning.**
- In their 2014 report 'What makes great teaching?' Coe et al define effective teaching as that which leads to improved student achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success. However, defining great teaching isn't an easy task. The yardstick by which ultimately a judgement about whether teaching is effective must be against the progress being made by students.
- Defining the core elements of effective, or great teaching, doesn't necessarily guarantee improved student performance. However, as a trust we aim to provide our schools with a framework of active ingredients that constitute effective teaching, or in this case, teaching principles. These principles define what we consider to be core knowledge for teachers to know and then be able to apply in their classroom, that can be adapted to the phase or age-range of pupils that a teacher works with.
- It is important schools consider how children learn, how they develop knowledge and skills, and how they can be supported to lay firm foundations for later learning. Teaching approaches that ensure long-term retention of knowledge, fluency in key

skills, and confident use of metacognitive strategies are crucial. These are fundamental to learning and are the 'bread and butter' of effective teaching.

Early Years Foundation Stage

'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.' EYFS Framework, 2020

The following guiding principles should help shape practice in the EYFS:

- **Playing and Exploring:** Children are encouraged to investigate and experience a range of areas, and to 'have a go'
- **Active Learning:** Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and they enjoy their achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically:** Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.
- **A Unique Child:** Recognising that every child is a learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships:** Helping children to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling Environments:** Providing environments that support and extend a child's development and learning.
- **Learning and Development:** Ensuring that all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

Time needs to be given to allow children to explore the environment independently and learn at their own pace. Adults are also to use a range of teaching strategies such as supporting child-initiated play, leading activities that have been planned from child interests and discrete teaching sessions. Adults need to plan for balance of these activities depending on the needs of the child. It is the role of all staff to ensure that the needs of all children are being met equally and that all children have an opportunity to take part in all activities. Adult led activities will become more frequent across the Foundation Stage as children progress with their learning.

Primary & Secondary

The table below summarises the key guiding principles that form the foundation to effective teaching and learning strategies within a primary, secondary or post-16 classroom setting. These have derived from evidence-based research, observations of classroom practice and from discussions between senior leaders in each of the member academies sitting on the TCAT Teaching and Learning Hub.

1. Planning			
Curriculum knowledge	Pupil knowledge	Literacy	Numeracy
2. High Expectations For All			
Clarity of routines that create certainty for students		Positive student teacher relationships based on mutual respect and understanding	
Motivating and challenging students so that they participate fully in learning		Being responsive in the classroom to manage behaviour	
3. Science of Learning			
Cognition, memory and schema	Attention		Metacognition & Self Regulation
4. Instruction			
Explaining, examples and modelling		Scaffolding	
Adaptation		Connecting concepts and knowledge	
5. Practice			
Guided to independent		Review and retrieval	
Inclusive adaptations and application		Collaboration	
6. Assessment			
Effective Questioning	Checking for understanding		Feedback

In addition to the above, strategic planning and effective implementation should be in place to enrich students' personal development and the broader holistic curriculum. Resources such as Lyfta, Learning by Questions, ClassVR, and the TCAT Digital Strategy are valuable tools that can meaningfully support the following areas:

Cultural Awareness and Ethical Understanding
Provide opportunities for students to explore diverse perspectives, traditions, and moral issues. The EEF highlights the value of social and emotional learning, which includes developing empathy and respect for others.
Immersive and Experiential Learning Opportunities
Enhance learning through real-world experiences, such as field trips, outdoor learning, and collaboration with experts. The EEF suggests that experiential learning, when carefully planned, improves engagement and knowledge retention by making abstract concepts tangible and relatable.
Opportunities To Promote Digital Literacy
Promoting digital literacy to prepare students to navigate and succeed in an increasingly digital world. According to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), effective use of

digital technology can enhance learning by improving the accuracy of teacher assessments and increasing the quality and quantity of student practice. Integrating digital literacy into the curriculum helps students develop essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication, which are vital for their future academic and professional roles.

What do these look like in practice?

Planning

- a) **Curriculum knowledge** – Knowledge of route towards pupil mastery of a curriculum. This includes the concepts and processes that pupils need to know at different stages of their educational journey and how these are sequenced and represented in teaching, and the common misconceptions that pupils develop in a subject.
- b) **Pupil knowledge** – Knowledge of what pupils know and don't know and what motivates them in the classroom and outside of it. Knowing the barriers that pupils can face and how to overcome these through teaching.
- c) **Literacy** – Knowledge of the literacy demands of each subject that pupils face and how these differ from one discipline to another and change as pupils move through school. Effective approaches to teaching oracy, reading, vocabulary and writing through each phase or subject discipline.
- d) **Numeracy** - Knowledge of the numeracy demands at different phases of education and how these progress through a pupil's education. Recognising and being able to teach common approaches to numeracy across subjects outside of mathematics.

High Expectations for All

- a) **Clarity of routines that create certainty for students** – Establishing and maintaining routines can increase both the amount of time that pupils spend learning, and the quality of that learning. Routines are just any aspect of the classroom that have a repeating and familiar pattern. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that establishing and maintaining routines leads to positive, predictable and motivating classrooms.
- b) **Positive student teacher relationships based on mutual respect and understanding** – teachers should seek to model and develop positive attitudes, values and behaviours that underpin successful learning – particularly emotional self-regulation – and show pupils the role of making mistakes in being successful.
- c) **Motivating and challenging students so that they participate fully in learning** – Pupils who experience success are more likely to be motivated, resilient and open to challenge. A teacher's job is to maximise learning – this means providing the right level of challenge. However, as well as offering challenge, it is also important that tasks enable pupils to experience a high success rate, which is a tricky balance to strike.
- d) **Being responsive in the classroom to manage behaviour** – Tackling low-level disruption – both proactively and reactively – can improve learning and foster a positive classroom environment over time. Effective teaching can increase time on task and proactively avoid problem behaviours to get learning back on track. In effective learning environments, pupils are clear about what they are expected to do and teachers enforce these expectations in a consistent and clear manner.

Science of Learning

- a) **Cognition, memory and schema** – Memory plays an important role in pupil learning. Teachers need to understand this and design instruction that is sensitive to the properties and limitations of memory to support learning.
- b) **Attention** – Attention naturally drifts and so teachers need to continuously monitor and actively direct pupil attention to maintain a classroom where all pupils succeed.
- c) **Metacognition** – Metacognition and self-regulation approaches to teaching support pupils to think about their own learning more explicitly, often by teaching pupils strategies for planning, monitoring and evaluating learning. Teachers can demonstrate effective use of metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies by modelling their own thought process and teaching pupils common strategies to overcome similar type problems.

Instruction

- a) **Explaining, examples and modelling** – Effective exposition uses models, well-planned explanations, concrete examples and is matched to pupils' needs. Effective teaching takes account of the limits of pupils' working memories, recognising that pupils' experienced cognitive overload if they are exposed to too much material at once. Teachers can manage pupil thinking through effective use of models and explanations.
- b) **Scaffolding** – Effective scaffolding gives pupils the knowledge and guidance to access challenging content but should be removed once pupils are experiencing high rates of success.
- c) **Adaptation** – Adapting teaching requires assessment of pupils' needs and appropriate teacher responses, before the lesson and within it, to enable a high pupil success rate. When pupils are introduced to new ideas, explicit guided teaching is more effective than pupils discovering new ideas without teacher support (Coe et al., 2014). As pupils learn at different rates, teachers can check pupils' needs through gathering information on what pupils do and don't understand yet.
- d) **Connecting concepts and knowledge** – Pupil learning is more successful if teachers check, activate and build on pupil prior knowledge. Prior knowledge helps us make sense of new material. "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner knows already" (Ausubel, 1968 in Simonsmeier et al., 2018).

Practice

- a) **Guided to independent** – Pupils must develop solid foundations of knowledge through carefully sequenced teaching and practice of what they are to develop and apply sophisticated mental models. Furthermore, providing opportunities for purposeful practice supports pupils to consolidate and secure what they have learned. Regular purposeful practice consolidates pupils' understanding and helps them to remember key ideas, which can happen in the 'we do' as well as the 'you do' parts of instructions.
- b) **Review and retrieval** – Daily review is an important component of instruction. Reviews help to strengthen the connections of previously learned material, whilst automatic recall frees up space in working memory for thinking. The effort applied by pupils in recalling recently learned material embeds it in long-term memory. The

more that this happens, the easier it is to connect new material to exiting prior knowledge.

- c) **Inclusive adaptations and application** – Teachers can use information about pupil understanding and needs to target support at the whole class, groups and individuals. When teachers know what their pupils have understood, and use this information to adapt their teaching, pupil's achievement increases (Speckesser et al., 2018). Teachers should also collect information about pupils needs and possible strategies, particularly for pupils with SEND, by working closely with colleagues including the SENCO.
- d) **Collaboration** - Creating opportunities for students to collaborate in solving problems, sharing ideas, and discussing concepts is a powerful tool to support students on their journey to independence. Peer-to-peer learning aligns with the Great Teacher Toolkit's emphasis on collaboration as a powerful learning strategy The EEF highlights the value of collaboration when paired with structured support to ensure equitable participation.

Assessment

- a) **Effective Questioning** – Effective questioning can guide pupil thinking through checking understanding, extending pupil thinking and fostering high-quality talk in a supportive classroom environment. Questioning is an essential tool for teachers to master as it can be used for many purposes, such as eliciting pupil thinking, checking understanding of instructions, or to see if pupils have enough fluent prior knowledge to introduce new content.
- b) **Checking for understanding** – Effective formative assessment shows the teacher what pupils are thinking: this makes it possible to meet pupils' needs, making it more likely they will meet learning goals.
- c) **Feedback** – Feedback helps pupils to improve and manage their own learning. Effective feedback should be deployed after considering its benefits and costs and allow pupils the opportunity to respond. Used effectively, feedback can have a significant impact on pupil learning, however it requires care and attention to ensure that it is helpful.

3. From Policy to Practice

Using coaching as a vehicle for improving practice, TCAT is committed to ensuring that all teaching staff have access to powerful CPD to ensure that the principles outlined within this policy are brought to life within the classroom to promote educational excellence for every student, in every classroom, every day. Using Step Lab as a platform, the trust is able to build a specific professional development curriculum bespoke to its member academies, promote consistent practices and improve the quality assurance of teaching and learning to support the trust wide CPD offer.

The model below outlines how the 'small steps approach' will help develop staff to mastering each of the principles outlined above (Cold Calling is given as a specific example):



4. Continuous Professional Development

The Challenge Academy Trust has a commitment to ongoing professional development for all teachers to enhance their skills and stay updated with the latest educational research. The EEF and the Great Teacher Toolkit both advocate the importance of professional growth for effective teaching and the continued development and engagement of educational hubs, professional growth model and the education connect platform help to drive this within each academy.

In their recent guidance report into Effective Professional Development, the EEF suggest that it is mechanisms or 'active ingredients' that make the difference to teacher learning when it comes to professional development.

The report identifies fourteen mechanisms which are divided into four categories to ensure that professional development is effective:

- **Building knowledge** by managing cognitive load and revisiting prior learning
- **Motivating teachers** by setting and agreeing goals
- **Embedding techniques** through instruction, modelling and feedback
- **Embedding practice** and habit formation through prompts, action planning and rehearsal

5. Wider Policies & Strategies

At TCAT, our guiding teaching and learning principles are designed to be read alongside the wider strategies of TCAT Learns, TCAT Thrives and TCAT Leads while also being informed by the trust's policies on equality and curriculum for excellence.

7. Monitoring and Review

We are committed to driving the continuous improvement of teaching and learning across all of our academies and participate in regular reviews to quality assure and celebrate, challenge and support the work of individual academies. The responsibility for the monitoring of teaching and learning in each academy rests with school leaders and those with delegated responsibility for the quality of education.