

Macmillan Academy

TEACHING & LEARNING

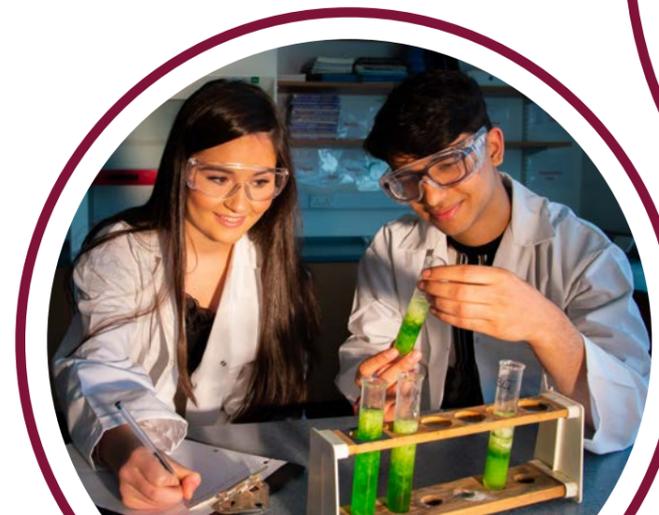


Inspiring every student to succeed



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INTRODUCTION

Over recent years a huge amount of educational research has been conducted into how we learn. As an academy we are constantly striving to enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for all of our students. Accordingly, over the past few years we have developed and implemented a teaching and learning strategy based upon the core principles of the latest most applicable research. All staff receive ongoing training on our teaching and learning framework, which is central to the culture and policies of the academy. As an academy we refer to this framework as OPTIC (optimising teacher impact in the classroom).

At its heart is a recognition that effective learning can only be achieved through a partnership between students and teachers. As an academy, our commitment to our students is to provide effective teaching. Teachers achieve this through thoughtful planning, clear instructions and explanations, questioning students to check their understanding, having positive relations and high expectations.

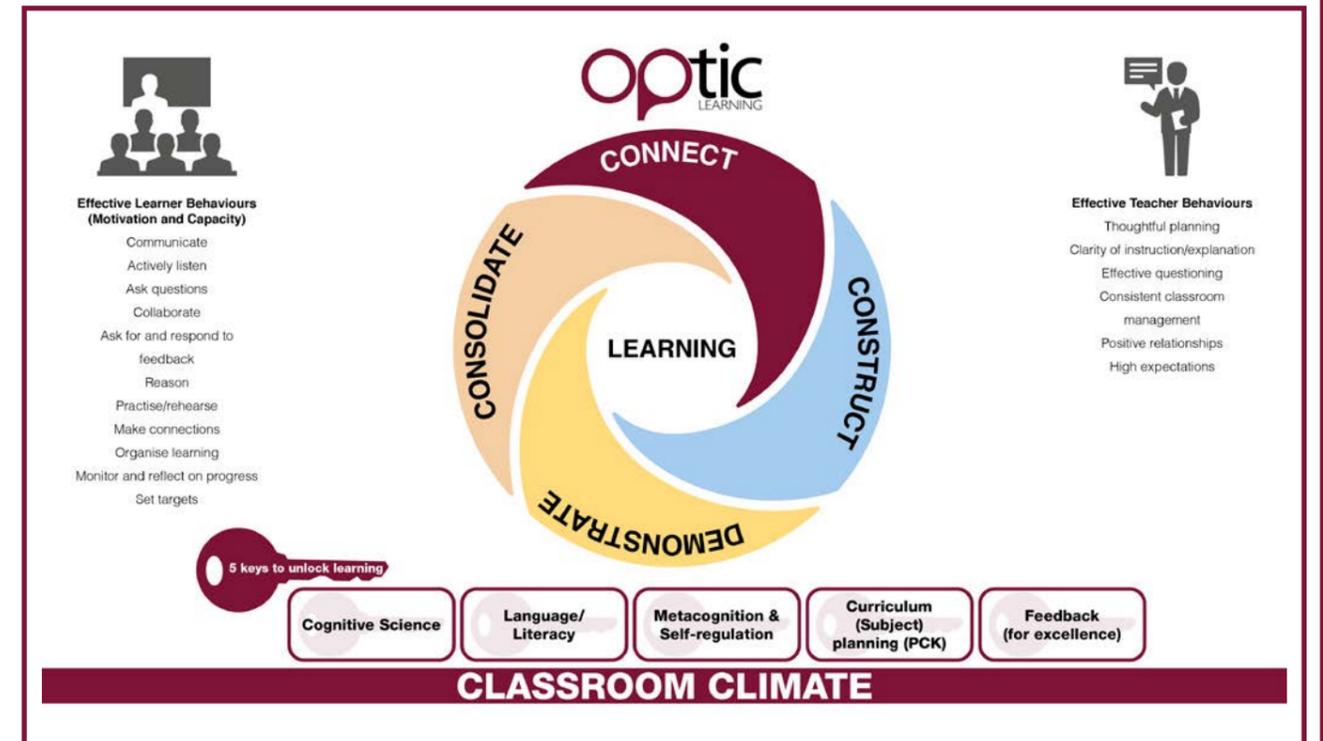
In return we expect all our students to demonstrate the following effective learning behaviours at all times; communicate, actively listen, ask questions, collaborate, ask for and respond to feedback, reason, practise/rehearse, make connections, organise learning, monitor and reflect on progress and set targets.

The OPTIC teaching and learning model has 5 underpinning keys which are deliberately chosen to ensure student progression and learning. These are taken from EEF research into what has the biggest impact on student achievement. Our underpinning keys are: cognitive science, literacy, pedagogical content knowledge, self regulation and feedback. It is also imperative to our teaching and learning model that classroom climate underpins all other elements as we believe without an effective classroom climate the other key elements can not be established effectively. Our continued focus on embedding the OPTIC teaching and learning model has allowed us to connect teaching and learning to the curriculum and develop a more consistent curriculum offer across all subjects.

Over the past few years, we have experienced unprecedented change. Our home learning approach has also been modified to reflect this. Students are asked to complete retrieval practice activities. These are designed to allow students to practise and rehearse subject matter already taught to help it 'stick' into their long term memories. (see appendix 1)



THE MODEL



WHAT OUR OPTIC JOURNEY LOOKS LIKE FROM BEGINNING TO MASTERY

We are currently in year 3 of our journey and are 'developing' our practice.

MASTERED

There is total alignment of school policies and practices with the Optic framework. Training enables staff to have a holistic and deep understanding of the model. Curriculum design shows explicit thinking and links to each element of the Optic model. Concepts are sequenced in a way that promotes understanding and the retention of knowledge over time. Confident and consistent application of the Optic model in the classroom leads to optimised impact on learning which is easily noticeable by those observing. Lesson planning exemplifies deep understanding of the Optic model and effective teacher behaviours are observed to be used confidently and consistently in lesson delivery. Such is the expertise that it could be effectively demonstrated to other teachers. In lessons, learners are highly engaged and making outstanding progress. Work in student books is of high quality and is reflective of the progress learners are making. Impact is clear on student progress data.

SECURE

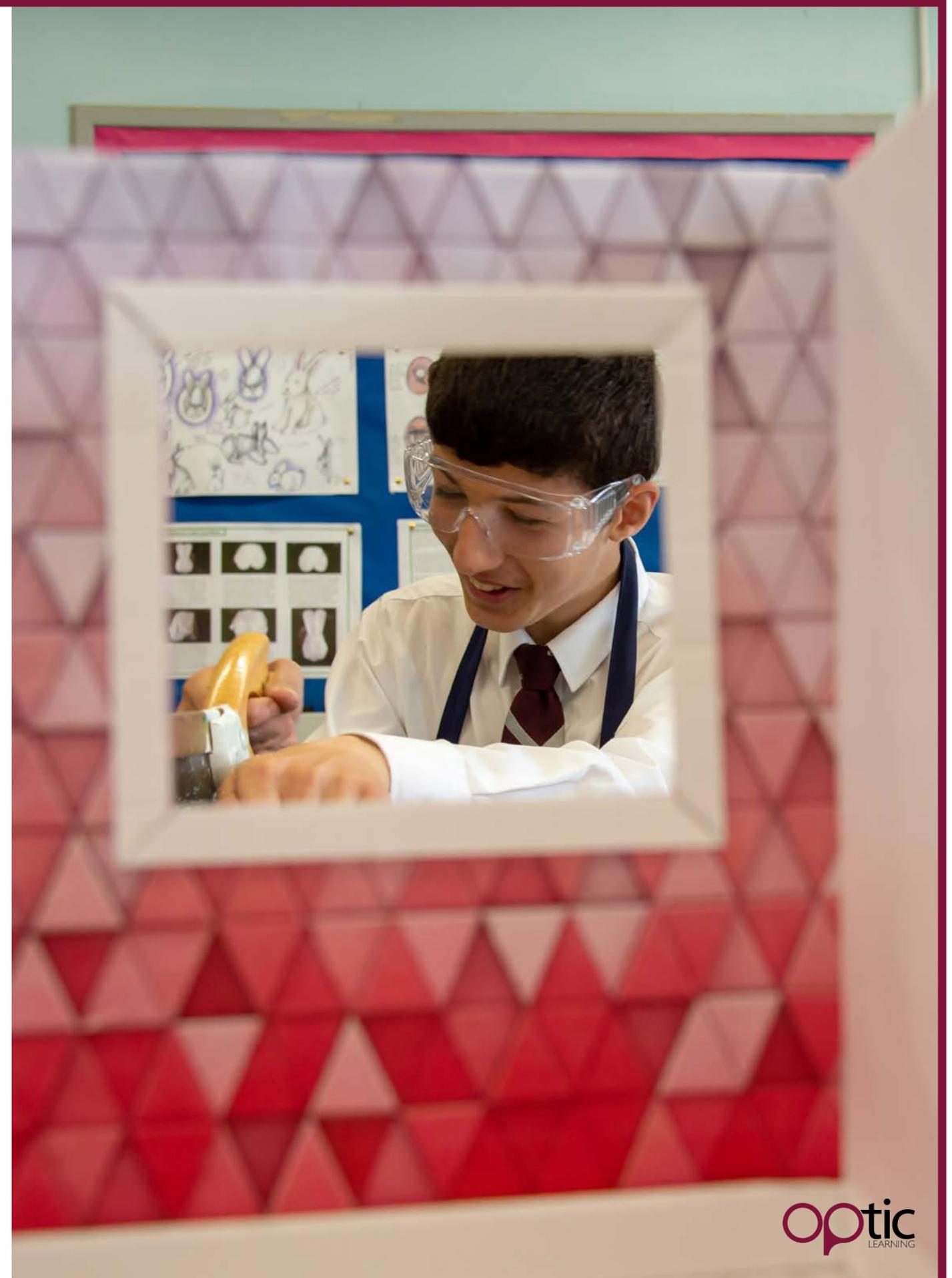
School policies or practices are in line with the Optic framework. Training allows staff to deepen their own understanding of the Optic framework and 5 keys, by looking at what this looks like optimally. Curriculum design shows Optic has been applied throughout SOW and lessons are thought about sequentially. Confident application of the Optic model in the classroom leads to positive impacts on learning which is noticeable by those observing. Lesson planning shows secure understanding of the Optic model and effective teacher behaviours are shown consistently through delivery in the classroom. Work in student books is of a generally good quality. Impact is partially shown on student progress data.

DEVELOPING

There is some evidence of the Optic model in school policies and practices. Training has taken place, but this has not yet led to a deep understanding of the Optic framework or the 5 keys to unlock learning. When addressing curriculum design there is some consideration of the Optic framework and the keys. Topics/ concepts are not always sequenced well. Teachers show an increasing thought of Optic in their planning and/ or delivery however use is not yet consistent. Application in the classroom has a generally positive impact on student learning however greater fluency is needed to optimise impact on learning. Work in student books is of a varied quality. Impact on student progress data is unclear.

BEGINNING

School policies do not reflect the Optic model. Training has taken place and staff have been signposted to tools to support optimising learning. Curriculum planning shows little reference to the Optic framework. Concepts are not sequenced logically. Teachers planning and/ or delivery shows little evidence of the Optic framework or the 5 keys to unlock learning. Work in student books is of a poor standard. Impact on student progress is not evident.



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM

The academy prides itself on placing emphasis on consistently high-quality teaching and ensuring that students produce high-quality work as if they were a scientist, artist or historian for example. In order to do so, the curriculum has been designed sequentially to give real thought and purpose behind what is taught, when and how students will demonstrate learning and progress. Each curriculum area has produced their intent for the students' learning, mid-term plans and individual lessons through which to deliver this intent. This process has been underpinned by the latest educational research produced by the EEF to ensure that practice is effective and provides the students with every opportunity to succeed. In the delivery of lessons five key areas have been the focus to help 'unlock' learning: cognitive science, language, self-regulation, responsive teaching, pedagogical content knowledge. Hand in hand with departments delivering substantive knowledge to the students, skills for future learning are developed through disciplinary learning to ensure students are equipped for lifelong learning and employment.

REMOTE EDUCATION

Throughout the pandemic students had access to online learning through Teams. Students who are still undergoing periods of absence due to Covid are continuing to be invited to join the live lessons that their peers are experiencing in the academy via Teams to ensure that they are not missing out on key learning.



LITERACY/READING

At the academy, we are working to improve the literacy levels of students, particularly since the introduction of exam reforms in 2017 which have increased rigour and made high levels of literacy a pre-requisite for being able to access the curriculum at all key stages. Our literacy strategy has been written to focus on: vocabulary, reading and writing (*the literacy strategy is available as a separate document*).

Vocabulary has been a key focus of curriculum design and there has been a whole school approach to teaching new vocabulary. Key vocabulary is being built into lessons to encourage students to use it in their written and oral answers. Staff encourage academic talk in their lessons and ask students to say their answers again but better, if they are not appropriately academic in tone. There is also a word of the week shared in tutorial so that tier 2 vocabulary is taught across the academy (these words were drawn up from a list of 500 key words that students need to know according to Closing the Vocabulary author Alex Quigley).

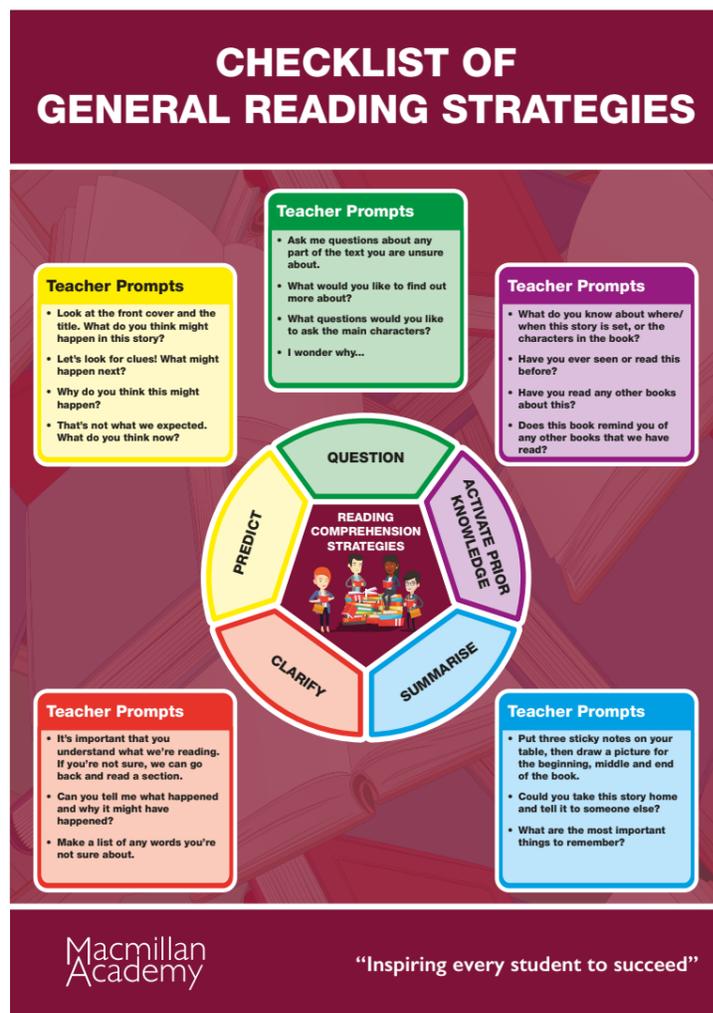
We are trying to develop reading for pleasure amongst all of our young people. There is a young librarians scheme, regular competitions in the library and book reviews highlighted in assemblies, broadcasts and social media. In addition, we have recently introduced tutor led reading in Key Stage 3. Within tutorial once a week a tutor led reading session will take place. Students will be given a 'class read' which is a book to share and discuss together with the aim of encouraging and improving reading and raising the profile of reading for pleasure. Students will engage with the text by using the reciprocal reader technique. The texts will be no more than 5 hours to read and non-white, non-male authors will be used where possible. If possible some books will be picked to enhance the curriculum, for example: Private Peaceful (WWI).

Alongside reading for pleasure, within the curriculum there is a focus on ensuring that students have access to quality texts. All mid-term plans must be linked to an academic piece of reading. This may be a short article, journal, extract from a book etc. The aim of this is to allow students to engage with high quality texts as well as exposing them to different vocabulary.

Additionally, all students in Year 7 have English library lessons whereby they read an appropriate reading level book and complete accelerated reader tasks. Students continue with the accelerated reader programme into Year 8.

To support our weakest readers we have a robust reading intervention programme led by our SENDCo. Students in Years 7 and 8 work in small intervention groups and develop their phonics or take part in accelerated reading to ensure they develop their fluency. Our weakest readers in Year 9 and above are improving their reading through the use of the 'Star' reading programme. Moreover, our SENDCo works with teachers to ensure students receive targeted help they need in lessons.

The next stage of our literacy strategy is to focus on writing and to try to create some standard operating procedures for writing, for example: a good paragraph, a persuasive piece of writing etc.



APPENDIX 1 - HOME LEARNING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Our aim in the academy is to optimise learning. To do this we need to give careful consideration to the assignments issued to students for completion outside of lesson time. As with lessons, home learning needs to have intentional design and deliberate thought, to ensure it has maximum impact. When planning home learning, we need to plan for opportunities for students to retrieve previous knowledge and for students to self-regulate their learning i.e. edit and improve their work independently.

We have drawn heavily on the work of the Education Endowment Foundation: Homework (Secondary) | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF You searched for homework - Best Evidence in Brief (beib.org.uk) to help formulate this guidance.

THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS (EEF SECONDARY HOMEWORK +5 MONTHS)

Home learning is seemingly more effective when it involves practice or rehearsal of subject matter already taught. Students should not typically be exposed to new materials for their home learning, unless they are judged more expert learners. Complex, open ended homework is often completed least effectively; whereas, short, frequent homework, closely monitored is more likely to have more impact.

The EEF have found that the best home learning should have five characteristics: purpose, efficiency, ownership, competence and inspiring.

- Purpose – all assignments are meaningful and students understand why it is important in the context of their academic experience (to increase a specific area of knowledge, or fluency in a particular area).
- Homework should relate to learning during normal school time. It should consolidate learning / retrieve knowledge, rather than be an add-on.
- Efficiency – it should not take an inordinate amount of time and should require some **hard thinking**.
- Ownership – students taking ownership of their homework, teachers not accepting a half-attempted piece – expecting the students best work every time.
- Competence – students should feel competent in completing home learning. Home learning that students can't do without help is not good home learning.

SOME SUGGESTIONS (LOTS OF CONSOLIDATION AND RETRIEVAL)

- Summarising notes (using a technique – such as the Cornell note taking technique)
- Using graphic organisers to recast classroom materials
- Guided research (no open ended projects)
- Big reads linked to a summary task / answering pre-planned questions (gives purpose to reading)
- Answering exam questions
- Guided revision
- Quiz forms that are self marking to help consolidate knowledge and key vocabulary
- As more content is covered add in further questions that require retrieval from older topics i.e. in science after teaching ecology and moving on to cells, set questions that incorporate fact-recall on cells but interleave these with questions from ecology.
- Then set questions linked to students having to look at multiple sources of information. Applying the same science example... set a question about a food chain and get students to apply their knowledge of cells by asking them to describe the structure of a cell in: grass (producer- plant cell), a grasshopper (consumer- animal cell) and bacteria (decomposer- prokaryotic cell). Also ask questions about the role of these organisms in the ecosystem.

TO DEVELOP GOOD LEARNER BEHAVIOURS OF SELF REGULATION AND ORGANISING LEARNING

Create and consistently implement routines around homework completion

- Set a deadline for the **same time each week**
- Provide an approximate amount of time for completion i.e. 20 minutes
- Provide resources to support students and teach them (model) how to use/ access them whilst they are in their lesson
- Perhaps provide a checklist so students can self regulate

Have you...?	Check when complete
Removed any sources of distraction (e.g. put away unnecessary devices)	
Noted the time at the start and finish	
Read the material prior to answering questions	
Answered in full sentences	
Answered all questions from memory	
Proof-read your answers by re-reading the material	

Get students to reflect on their home learning

- What did they do when they ran in to a challenge?
- How did they reduce distractions?
- What do they need to work on next time

EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

- All home learning must be assigned in Frog. Assignments should be archived (not deleted) once the deadline has passed
- The class teacher should ensure that the home learning is set at an appropriate level to the student in the class. Consideration should be given to any student with Special Educational Needs
- Instructions on how to complete the task must be clear. Each task should have a deadline. (Ideally this is a routine day) Deadlines should not be set for the following day.
- Explain to students how long they should be spending on their work
- Feedback (whole class, self/peer, individual feedback) must be timely and should be provided before the next task is set
- We have high expectations of the standard of presentation of class and home learning, this is acknowledged when marking books
- Give out rewards linked to high quality work
- It is the responsibilities of teachers to keep a record of all tasks set and track the performance of every student in their group
- Home learning that is not handed in is chased up

EXPECTATION OF OUR STUDENTS

- To note in their planner what is set and WHEN it needs to be completed
- To self- regulate their learning (to go back and revisit completed work to check over it)
- To remove any distractions whilst completing their work
- Note how long they spend on their work
- Complete work to the best of their ability
- Present their work neatly
- To have produced the work themselves – no plagiarism
- To organise when they will complete their learning
- To hand in work on time and in the manner designated by their teacher

KEY STAGE 3 HOME LEARNING

Students will receive 1 task per fortnight in English, Mathematics and Science.

In all other subjects students can expect at least one piece of work per half term.

Students should receive high quality feedback. *All teachers should follow their department feedback policy.*

Home learning should be placed in the back of students' books.

KEY STAGE 4 HOME LEARNING

All subjects should set 1 task per week except for Core PE. As a guide, each task should take the average student in the group 30 minutes to an hour to complete.

More substantial tasks could be set to be completed during the holiday periods.

High quality and timely feedback is expected on all set tasks. *All teachers should follow their department feedback policy.*

Home learning should be placed in the back of students' books.

KEY STAGE 5 HOME LEARNING

Students can expect work to be set on a regular basis depending on the needs of the course.

No limit is placed on the amount of work set.

Students should also recognise the need to undertake independent study (big reads/ Moocs etc.) outside of work set by teachers, in order to broaden their subject knowledge.

Unlike KS3 and KS4 students, KS5 students can expect some tasks to be set for the next day.

All work should be placed in students' assessment books.

All teachers should follow their department feedback policy.

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