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FEATURING

**Why supermodelled CPD
drives the most impact**

Laura Grainger

**Collaborative learning
through peer coaching**

Miriyan Sikkens

**Building independence
through guided practice
and modelling**

Hannah Golding

**Supporting developing
writers through I DO**

*Amanda Ward and
Kim Featherstone*

**Boosting pace and
participation with
clickers and timers**

Sarah Brown

**Transforming subject
knowledge into
methodical masterpieces**

Laura Kay

**Scaffolding to build
thinking habits in KS3**

Bethany Lanham

**FOREWORD BY
ELMA LAWSON**

Director of
Education

By Elma Lawson

Director of Education

Anthem Schools Trust



“The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” McKinsey 2007

The most important thing we can do is have the best teachers in front of our children. Teacher development has to be our top priority, especially at a time when we are having to be creative and resourceful in our recruitment strategy.

A year on from the launch of The Anthem Way, which took place at our November 2023 leadership conference, I am delighted to be able to introduce our first edition of Versed. Versed will be a termly publication that will share the impact The Anthem Way is having in classrooms and on outcomes for students across the Trust.

The Anthem Way pedagogical approach represents our shared basic assumption that everyone buys into the inclusion ethos of the Education Strategy – every student, every lesson, all the time! Remember, this ethos underpins our ambition to improve outcomes for every Anthem student and to change mindsets (no excuses) so we can collectively raise standards across the piece. This is not yet prevalent in all our schools – but as long as our leaders believe in it and live by it, we will get there!

In the best classrooms, teachers are following the principles of The Anthem Way and bringing them to life, focusing on the impact and not the process of each individual element. In line with our Anthem values of collaboration and excellence, Versed is another tool to enable collective capacity and expertise. It provides another vehicle for identifying and sharing effective school improvement practice, thereby raising the performance of the highest achieving schools while reducing the gap between them and the lower achieving. This ‘upward convergence, horizontal approach’ to school improvement is at the heart of the Education Strategy. I am really grateful for the excellent contributions from the two Lauras, Miriyan, Hannah, Amanda and Kim, Sarah, and Bethany in our very first edition.

A new Teacher Development Strategy will follow in Spring 2025. We want to be sure that, in addition to pedagogical instructional and live coaching for every teacher, we have clear pathways of progression for our talented teachers and can ensure that we retain them.

The Anthem Institute showcases expert practice across the Trust through videos and practice guides. Our vision for 2024-25 is that we continue to build on this by growing the resource bank and using Progress Teaching to target CPD around the strands where it is needed most. This will be coupled with our coaching strategy.

If we are forensic around teacher development, homing in on granular areas for development and then providing deliberate practice via expert coaching, we will reap the benefits and achieve the best outcomes for every student!

Enjoy the read!

By Laura Grainger

Head of Curriculum,
Pedagogy and
Assessment



A year on from the launch of The Anthem Way it's important to stop and reflect on the progress we've made and the shared language and clear vision around pedagogy that The Anthem Way has helped us develop.

That said, it is also important to remind ourselves of the wording in the introduction of the *Anthem Leaders' Toolkit*: "The Anthem Way is only as strong as our leadership of it. As leaders at all levels, we are all responsible for modelling, promoting and embedding it and it will only work if we all do so relentlessly."

Why supermodelled CPD drives the most impact

It is easy to become distracted by the 'noise' that accompanies school leadership, but leaders must keep a laser-like focus on teaching and learning. In *Leverage Leadership*, Paul Bambrick Santoyo details how strong schools (and in our case, trusts!) have the following in common: codification of great practice (The Anthem Way) and tight, replicable systems that allow leaders to prioritise teaching on an hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute basis. They frequently coach and develop staff. This ensures that excellent teaching becomes the norm and is coachable rather than being left to chance.

Model examples

At Anthem our most effective and most rapidly improving schools have two things in common: strong coaching models and a granular approach to CPD.

The concept of supermodelling – delivering CPD to staff using the strategies of The Anthem Way as you would to students – is a quick win to show staff what effective practice looks like and what you want them to do. A recent CPD session on feedback and assessment at The Deepings begun with direct vocabulary instruction on the word feedback and then involved staff using turn and talk with the facilitator later checking staff understanding using mini whiteboards. Super modelling in this way means there are no missed opportunities to reinforce expectations to staff and ensure that strands of The Anthem Way become habit.

In *Evidence Snacks*, Peps McCrea talks about the value of modelling during CPD: "One of the most potent ingredients of effective professional development (PD) is 'modelling'. But what it is and why?"

Basically, a model is an example of an aspect of teaching that is a) effective and b) can be replicated by others. They can take a variety of guises, such as:

- A **live demo** or **video** showing how to give instructions in a way that optimises cognitive load.
- A **case study** illustrating how planning an exit ticket can help reliably prepare for the following lesson.

Models are powerful for individuals because what theory looks like in practice is not always obvious, and teaching is often too rich to describe in words alone. They also boost our motivation for improvement... when we see another teacher do it, our belief that we can do it takes a leap. Models are also powerful for schools because they force us to 'codify' what good looks like, and in doing so, create a common language which we can use to better discuss teaching and improvement.

One small step at a time

How can we make the most of models in PD?
Three strategies help:

1. Tell as well as show: Clearly list out the features of the model that make it effective. Without this,

teachers can end up attending to things that don't matter so much and replicating such redundant features in their practice.

2. Explain the why: Learning is invisible which makes the cause and effect of the classroom not always obvious. When providing models, it's important to explain how they work. Without this, we put a ceiling on adaptive expertise.

3. Provide multiple models: A model is only one configuration of what effective looks like. When we provide multiple models, we help teachers discern the important features of an approach and mitigate against lethal mutations.

A common mistake when it comes to modelling is to try to focus on too much at once

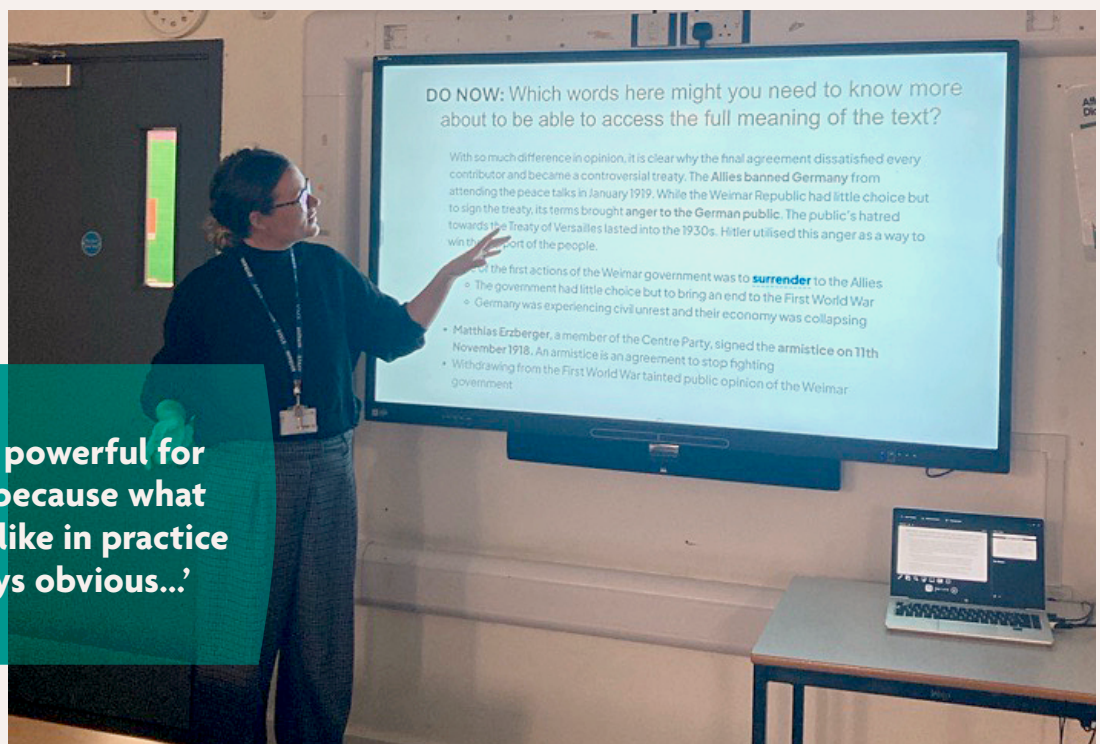
(which is why lesson observations aren't always the most useful of learning experiences). Paradoxically, focusing on one small step at a time can typically help us to get there quicker.

Further research on the impact of modelling in CPD can be found in the following academic article:

Sims, S., Fletcher-Wood, H., Godfrey-Fausset, T., & Meliss, S. (2023). Modelling evidence-based practice in initial teacher training: causal effects on teachers' skills, knowledge and self-efficacy. Ambition Institute.

In the meantime, enjoy our articles on the impact of specific strands of The Anthem Way in this launch edition of *Versed*.

Showing how it's done: Laura demonstrates modelling during a CPD session with staff from Oakbank School.



'Models are powerful for individuals because what theory looks like in practice is not always obvious..'

By Miriyan Sikkens

Deputy Headteacher

Abacus Belsize
Primary School



Following my learning on oracy from the Voice 21 programme and our identification that we wanted to develop metacognitive talk at Abacus, we introduced 'rally coaching' to staff and students in the Spring term, earlier this year.

The term Rally Coach was coined by Spencer Kagan and is part of his Cooperative Learning Approaches. Rally coaching is all about using excellent oracy skills to further learning and getting students to articulate 'the process' out loud, particularly in skills-based subjects. Arithmetic procedures in particular lend themselves very well to this approach.

It's all about oracy

Oracy skills are used to explain a methodology clearly in a 'think-aloud' as a student completes a task. The partner practises their oracy skill of listening and making mental notes to build a picture. They can ask for clarification and extra details once the

self-checking a task much better. More often than not, children will self-correct, and the partner (coach) can simply congratulate their peer on their resilience.

A culture of oracy must be established before starting to explore rally coaching. If children are shy to speak and do not yet value learning through talking, making 'errors' in thinking and discussing misconceptions of a range of ideas, the rally coach will not work. Partnering children up in mixed fluency pairs helps the children start with a model in their partners that is more likely to work.

Aligned with The Anthem Way

Rally coaching also fits seamlessly within The Anthem Way and can be linked specifically to the following teaching prompts:

- Student oracy is celebrated. Students who model excellent oracy via formal, subject specific vocabulary and well-structured talk and who respond to peers constructively are praised.
- Teachers use 'turn and talk' with specific tasks to promote effective peer dialogue and ensure every student is thinking.
- Mixed pair and group work is used effectively and appropriately. Students have opportunities to discuss, elaborate on, justify and develop their understanding through discussion with each other.

All these sit within the literacy and oracy strand of the cycle for expert teaching.

Collaborative learning through peer coaching

calculation is completed. Limiting the questions and comments until after the task is finished allows children to self-correct. Once ideas are articulated by the children, they hold themselves to account for completing and

Rally coaching also supports independent practice in the YOU DO strand as it supports students to develop fluency – especially around applying processes so that when they reach the YOU DO, they are more likely to be successful. Teachers plan learning activities which also revisit previous content so that students can retrieve and develop fluency.

Putting it into practice

Here's a summary of the steps involved in rally coaching:

Students are paired together:

- One is partner A, and one is partner B.
- Students solve problems or answer questions aloud in pairs.
- Students take turns solving one of their problems or questions aloud, so their partner coach can listen to their thinking and process.
- As partner B listens, they check for accuracy, clarify any misconceptions, and 'coach' partner A as needed.
- Students narrate the process as they solve the problem.
- Their partner listens to check for errors in the process. Note the use of mathematical vocab also being developed.

High frequency errors:

Where can it go wrong?

- If the teacher forgets to remind students of the ground rules, they don't follow the process correctly.
- If students interrupt and give each other too much

help, some students become 'passengers'. Passengers don't think and so don't learn from the thought process.

- If the process hasn't been clearly taught via whole class I DO and YOU DO, and students go into it with misconceptions and apply their misconceptions.

You can see students modelling this process in a granular practice video on the Anthem Institute.

Measuring impact

How do we know that it has had impact? Student voice tell us that students find rally coaching useful as it makes them think through the process so they feel more able to understand the process and can pick up errors and work out where they may have gone wrong. We feel that long term this is a key strategy to help us develop more resilient learners.

'A culture of oracy must be established before starting to explore rally coaching.'

Abacus students modelling the rally coaching process in Miriyan's granular practice video on the Anthem Institute



By Hannah Golding

Assistant Head and
Curriculum Lead

All Saints Junior School



Literacy Tree is an excellent resource: its diverse, engaging, literacy-rich texts enable schools to build an infectious reading culture. Each half term draws on texts that immerse children in an inspiring theme that links all their books together.

The Literary Leaves is one strand of this – its planning focuses on reading skills and the content domains, or as many of us affectionately call them, the VIPERS. This planning ensures that these skills are progressively revisited across a unit of work. However, as with any learning resource, it is only as effective as its implementation; it is a platform that should be thoughtfully adapted. The Literary Leaf planning as it stands can be heavily reliant on independent application and assessment without much guided practice and modelling – lesson plans are usually structured as ‘read and then answer questions’.

At the start of our Literacy Tree journey, as it was a new curriculum, teachers perhaps felt hesitant to deviate from the planning, however, sticking solely to this approach resulted in children being less confident and more reluctant to tackle independent learning. So this is where the thoughtful adaptation comes in, using the WE DO strand of The Anthem Way, with guided practice and modelling at the heart of reading inputs. The exemplars demonstrate what this looks like in practice.

The proof of the pudding...

The most impactful evidence of this approach being successful is our data and our books, both of which clearly show progress across the school.

While we are incredibly proud of this, we want to keep going from strength to strength as a school. As a one-form entry with confident, capable and independent teachers, we believe our next step lies in collaboration. Since September, we are building time into our monitoring schedule to ensure collaborative book looks, and peer observations happen half termly - an opportunity to celebrate, share and strengthen good practice.

Building independence through guided practice and modelling

Exemplar 1
Year 6 Session 2 of ‘The Little Match Girl Strikes Back’

The original planning suggests reading the chapter, completing a ‘role on the wall’ (a key Literacy Tree learning routine) and then independently answering five questions, one being an infamous ‘impression’ question, which always needs extra practice.

The adaptation in purple therefore, was to use the first four questions as a discussion tool while reading, keeping the children focussed on following and listening to the text.

The class then work with the class teacher to complete the role on the wall through partner talk, discussion and the teaching using strategic questioning to draw out inferences.

The teacher then models how to use these inferences to answer the impression question but extending this to use evidence from the text. Recall of applying this knowledge more independently can then be seen in Exemplar 2 (see next page).

Session 2 - Chapter 1: Getting to know Bridie (2d)

Words and phrases to define before reading: hankies, pawn shop, draughty, farthing, in tow, doted, chilblains

Read the rest of Chapter 1 with children.

While reading, children can complete a role on the wall (see resources) for Bridie. Note down ways she behaves and what this tells us about her. Alternatively, complete as a class once finished reading, focusing on making inferences to identify her characteristics.

- 1) Look at page 4. What was Bridie's attitude to Queen Victoria?
- 2) 'But that was London for you - home to the very richest and the very, very poorest.' What did Bridie mean by this statement? Tick **one** box below.
 - London was a fair and equal city ☐
 - There was plenty of money in London ☐
 - London was a clean and calm place ☐
 - London was an unfair and unequal city ☐
- 3) "You could sell flames to a fireman, you could!" Mam always laughed. (Page 6) What did Mam think of Bridie?
- 4) How did Mam and Bridie behave towards Fergal? Why?
- 5) In chapter 1, we learn a lot about Bridie's character. What are your impressions of her? Give one impression and **two** pieces of evidence from the text to support this.

Session 2 - Chapter 1: Getting to know Bridie (2d)

Words and phrases to define before reading: hankies (handkerchief), pawn shop (a business who loans money to people in exchange for valuable items), draughty (cold/uncomfortable due to currents of cold air), farthing (a bronze coin; 1/4 of a penny), in tow (following along), doted (expressed excessive love or fondness), chilblains (inflammation of the hands/feet due to cold and moisture).

Read the rest of Chapter 1 with children.

Discussion Qs as a class using partner talk:

- 1) Look at page 4. What was Bridie's attitude to Queen Victoria?
 - 2) 'But that was London for you - home to the very richest and the very, very poorest.' What did Bridie mean by this statement? Tick **one** box below.
 - London was a fair and equal city ☐
 - There was plenty of money in London ☐
 - London was a clean and calm place ☐
 - London was an unfair and unequal city ☐
 - 3) "You could sell flames to a fireman, you could!" Mam always laughed. (Page 6) What did Mam think of Bridie?
 - 4) How did Mam and Bridie behave towards Fergal? Why?
- Children complete a role on the wall (see resources) for Bridie, focusing on making inferences to identify her characteristics. How could we use the 'role on the wall' to answer this question?
- 5) In chapter 1, we learn a lot about Bridie's character. What are your impressions of her? Give one impression and **two** pieces of evidence from the text to support this.

Bridie

give caring

understanding

distressed

jealous-minded

stubborn

imaginative

disparate

confident

been determined

hardhearted

unhappy

Am I going to see your 'herring'?

In chapter 1, we learn a lot about Bridie's character. What are your impressions of her? Give one impression and **two** pieces of evidence from the text to support this.

| Impression | Evidence |
|------------|--|
| discontent | Bridie was warning people her mother was unkind and could change sides. Her mother said she could sell matches for a penny. |

Top right:
Original planning

Above right:
Adapted planning
in purple

Right: Learning
in books

Exemplar 2
Year 6 Session 4 of ‘The Little Match Girl Strikes Back’

Again, the original planning suggests reading and then the children answering seven questions independently.

Instead, the planning has been adapted so that cherry-picked questions have been broken down into sections: as a class, with my partner, independently, each containing similar question styles.

As a class: using partner talk, cold calling and lots of ‘thinking aloud’, the class teacher models the application of key skills to show the children how to be successful with particular questions types and the question is answered as a class team.

With a partner: encouraging the children to model themselves on what was done as a class, they ‘think aloud’, and refine their thinking through partner discussion.

Finally, independently: children apply their knowledge using the guided modelling. Within the independent section, there is also an impression question – an opportunity to apply the guided modelling used two sessions previously in Exemplar 1 (assessing recall and retrieval).

Top right:
Original planning

Above right:
Adapted planning
in purple

Right:
Learning in books

Session 4 - Chapter 3: Factory work (2d/h)

Words to define before reading: stern, shabby, fumes, phosphorus, stock, flitted

Read chapter 3 with children.

Ask children to note how the bosses and supervisors treat their workers. How do the adults talk to children? Have a discussion with children regarding how things have changed since Victorian times.

Children answer the following questions independently:

1) Name **two** ways the narrator compares the factory to a prison.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |

2) How was the visitor's entrance different from the worker's one?

3) Why did Mam not want to live near the factory?

4) Why was the factory designed so visitors and passers-by could not see the workers?

5) Why did the bosses accuse the sick workers of drinking too much alcohol?

6) Why did the white phosphorus seem harmless at first to the children?

7) What is your impression of Mr Scott? Give **two** pieces of evidence from the text to support your answer.

Session 4 - Chapter 3: Factory work (2d/h)

Words to define before reading: stern (firm, strict, uncompromising), shabby (showing signs of wear or neglect), fumes (smoke/vapour from substances; often harmful), phosphorus (a flammable, poisonous chemical element), stock (a supply of goods for sale), flitted (to move lightly/swiftly)

Read chapter 3 (up until p.42) with children.

Discuss as we read:

P.35

What does the factory remind you of and why? A prison – high walls, iron gates

How was the visitor's entrance different from the worker's one and what impression does that give you of how workers were treated? - shabbier entrance, workers weren't valued

Discussion:

Ask children to note how the bosses and supervisors treat their workers. How do the adults talk to children? Have a discussion with children regarding how things have changed since Victorian times.

First VIPER focus is 2h (explain).

As a class:

1) Why was the factory designed so visitors and passers-by could not see the workers?

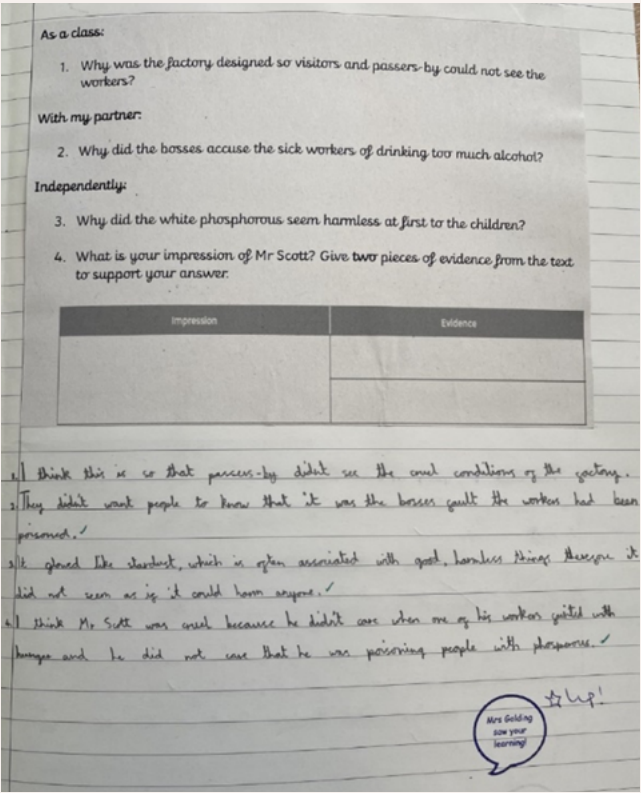
With a partner:

2) Why did the bosses accuse the sick workers of drinking too much alcohol?

Independently:

3) Why did the white phosphorus seem harmless at first to the children?

Next VIPER focus is 2d (infer). Remind children that we practised 'impression' questions together last week and now I want to see them independently apply their knowledge to this question.

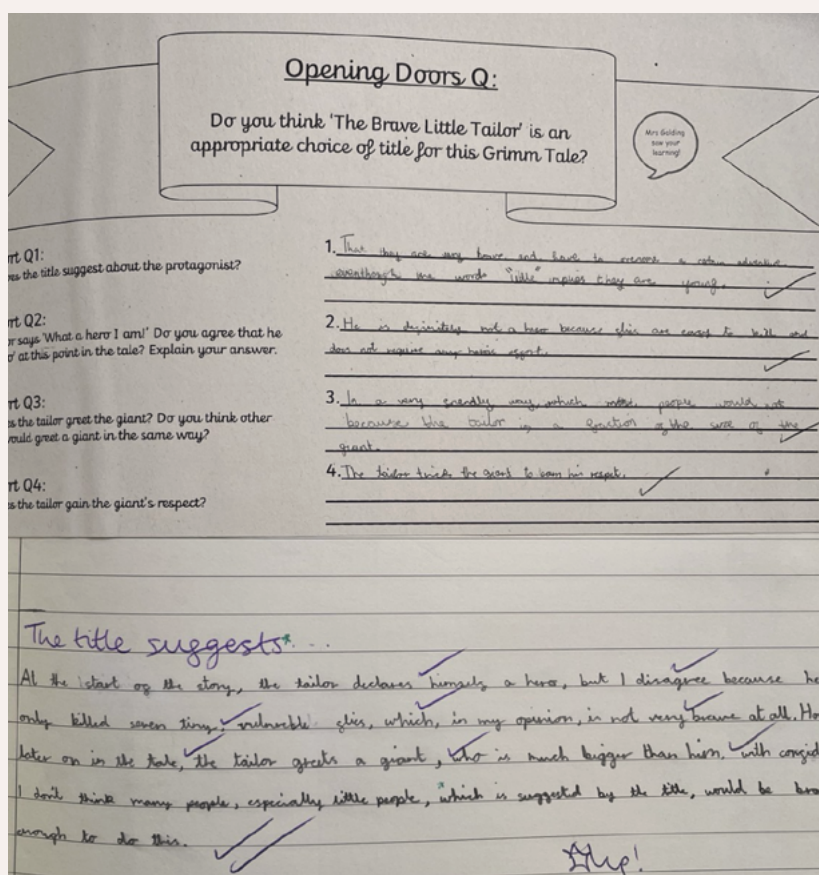


Exemplar 3

Year 6 Session 7 of 'Grimm Tales for Young and Old'

Here, following their latest assessments, it was identified that GDS children needed extra instruction on answering three-mark inference questions. To do this, an 'opening doors' question has been broken down into 'stepping stone' questions. This is a 'Bob Cox' method, showing how other effective schools of thought can be employed within another platform's context.

The first support question is done as a class, with the teacher as the expert, leading and drawing out their prior knowledge. Children then work in partners to answer the other support questions. Coming back together, children are able to share ideas and bounce off one another, adding to their responses. The teacher takes this as an opportunity to collect the children's ideas and then model how to convert these smaller answers into a longer, more developed, coherent response. Children then give it a go themselves.



Session 7 – Stitched up! (2d)

Words to define before reading: tailor, lugged, squadron, corpse

This, and the following two sessions, focus on the story of *The Brave Little Tailor*.

Tell the children that in this tale, the little tailor avoids mishaps by tricking others – not in a sinister way but to survive. There are parallels between this and Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo*, the tailor being the mouse and the Gruffalo akin to the giant that the tailor meets. You may want to reference this if you feel using this as a mental model of the text would help with children's understanding.

Let the children read up to 'Dear, oh dear you need some exercise' before responding to the following questions.

- 1) How do you think the old woman felt towards the tailor as she 'weighed it (the jam) out, grumbling, and went on her way'? Why?
- 2) What two physical features enabled the tailor to keep going for so long?
- 3) What is it that the giant misunderstands of the tailor's sash that reads, 'SEVEN WITH ONE BLOW'?

Session 7 – Stitched up! (2d)

Words to define before reading: tailor, lugged, squadron, corpse

This, and the following two sessions, focus on the story of *The Brave Little Tailor*.

Introduce the opening doors question about today's tale. Explain how the support questions will help and children work in pairs to plan out their responses using the support questions. Explain how the 1st support question will help us before we've even read anything! Discuss the title and encourage children to draw on prior knowledge – 'little' suggests perhaps he's vulnerable and has to overcome many obstacles, showing bravery and heroism.

Read to 'Dear, oh dear you need some exercise'.

Now discuss the other support questions and children work in pairs to record ideas.

Come back together and discuss how they can now apply their support questions to a bigger response. Model how to use the sentence stems. Children now apply the knowledge independently to write their own response.

Above:
Learning in books

Left:
Original planning

Bottom left:
Adapted planning
in purple

By Amanda Ward,
Teaching and
Learning Leader

By Kim Featherstone,
Writing lead

Boston West Academy



At Boston West Academy, a key priority at the end of the 2022-23 academic year was the improvement of writing outcomes across the school. We had introduced a focused sequence for teaching writing, but our evidence was showing us that this wasn't having the impact that we desired in terms of giving students the tools they required to write effectively, at and above age-related expectations.

So we were excited by the introduction of Literacy Tree for 2023-24 and were hopeful that it would help to support teachers to teach writing effectively.

Supporting developing writers through I DO

From the start, it was clear that Literacy Tree provided more opportunities for writing and yet we knew that to develop the craft of writing, these would need to be carefully planned for, and structured.

Think, write, repeat...

To support teachers with the implementation of this, we decided to adopt the I DO, WE DO, YOU DO approach in writing lessons. This was perfectly timed to coincide with the launch of The Anthem Way which is designed to build cumulative fluency and release students when their knowledge and skills have been scaffolded with precision.

Initially, we concentrated on the I DO focus. We designed CPD for teachers to highlight and exemplify the importance of creating effective worked examples for students. We ensured that all modelled worked examples were linked tightly to the writing objectives that were being explicitly taught. Whilst Literacy Tree provided some examples of these, through CPD, we demonstrated the importance of tailoring these to the specific needs of students within our classes. In addition, we focused on the importance of metacognitive talk and 'thinking aloud' to make the thought processes behind the writing explicit to the students.

This was a crucial part of the process: to novice writers, the 'expert' teacher can make the process look easy, and yet, in reality, writing is one of the most cognitively demanding activities we expect students to do. We needed to ensure that students understood the mental effort that goes in to constructing effective writing. Examples of this at the I DO stage included modelling how to segment words for spelling, deliberating over the choice of punctuation, and experimenting with vocabulary to create a desired effect. We wanted teachers to show students that to be effective writers, they need to think hard.

The importance of monitoring

After the initial CPD, we made the implementation of this a key focus for monitoring, both at school level and at trust level, through the Collaborative



Doing the DO:
Boston West Academy
has used careful
scaffolding to help
children become
better writers.

**‘We wanted teachers
to show students
that to be effective
writers, they need
to think hard.’**

Review Days (CRDs). This was an important stage of the implementation as we were able to see how theory transferred into classroom practice. Through monitoring, we recognised that some further CPD was needed to show that at this stage, the modelling should be completely led by the teacher and that metacognitive talk was an essential component of the practice. Since the additional CPD, further monitoring has shown that teachers are now confident with this stage of the

process, using effective worked examples and metacognitive talk to make the writing composition process explicit to all students.

The impact of this is becoming clear as through listening to student voice, we have learned that they have a greater understanding of the hard thinking needed when composing their writing. The approach has impacted positively upon writing attainment for many students, particularly those who are disadvantaged, and there are certain pockets of strong practice

that we want to disseminate and share as we move forward.

In addition, monitoring has identified the passivity of a minority of students during this phase of the writing process and so we have already begun looking at how we might resolve this during the next academic year. We have begun some trials, involving more active engagement of students in our own classes, and are monitoring these carefully, before deciding whether to roll these practices out more widely.

By Sarah Brown

Director of English

The Deepings School



The concept of high think/participation ratio and excellent pace is intrinsic to the success of The Anthem Way. In January, patterns and trends from lesson drop ins in the English department were indicating that as a team we weren't always maximising every minute with students.

Following coaching from the Trust Lead, the granular strategy that myself and our 2i/c in English introduced across our team was the use of board clickers and timer. The intention was that clickers and timers would be a quick win to facilitate better pace and create an enhanced sense of purpose for everyone

Boosting pace and participation with clickers and timers

Within a week of identifying the issue, I had bought the team clickers to use with Power Points in lessons. This supported participation in the following ways:

- Teachers leaving their desks and being present and active within the room; being able to make eye contact and use non-verbal body language with students where adjustments may be needed regarding engagement.
- WE DO – if teachers had prepared a model prior to

the lesson, they could reveal elements of this whilst stood at the board. This created more discussions with students and opened deeper level questioning.

- Long term I hoped to see teachers moving beyond checking for compliance and providing quality live feedback in the moment whilst intentionally monitoring the room.

I also purchased timers for the team. This has supported pace in the following ways:

- Entry to lessons and immediate engagement with the starter task. Students accept there is a time limit in which to complete the tasks. This has resulted in a more settled start to lessons.
- Used when completing independent tasks, students are mindful of having limited time to complete their work. So, many students who would often daydream for the first five minutes are now becoming engaged more quickly.
- For the team, this also provides an opportunity to use the 3:30:30 method, resulting in live marking being undertaken (immediate feedback) to students.
- Timers also allow for the next phase of the lesson to be completed as time hasn't overrun. For example, moving on to peer/self-assessment.

Clickers and timers can be used at all points of the lesson to enhance all strands of The Anthem Way - because practice becomes

sharper, and students are more engaged. The most obvious strand of The Anthem Way this approach applies to is Behaviour, relationships and routines; the clicker frees staff to move away from the computer at the front, to get out round the room and monitor compliance as well as giving live feedback. We wanted to motivate students to be hyper focussed on learning and feel a sense of urgency when using the timer. This would then be backed up by teachers then narrating the positive to get momentum and reinforce expectations.

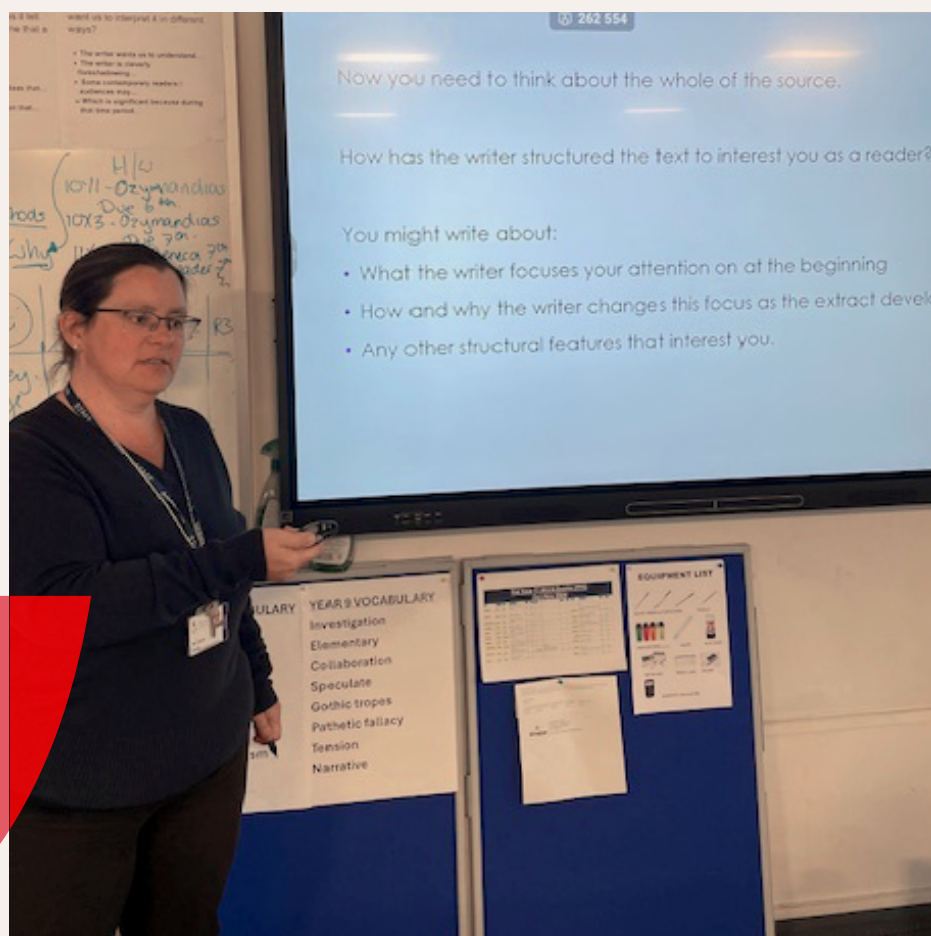
Simple, but effective

When I initially put this strategy in place I modelled to staff how to use these devices within lessons and made myself vulnerable by allowing myself to be filmed using them and then being coached by the team. This was done through our department time and secured buy-in from the team, opening up discussions around pace and the importance of this. It also had the unintended positive effect of beginning a discussion on pace, not only within the lessons themselves but also in relation to the bigger picture of curriculum design and sequencing.

We have realised as a team that we need to take a more proactive approach to scheduling more YOU DO time to really build student confidence in writing fluency and working independently for a prolonged period. It is too late if we leave this until KS4! The team got behind it and I now monitor this through drop-ins and team discussions.

It's something really simple that has been very effective. Our outcomes went up by 10% last summer and I can't wait to see the impact long term! I would recommend to all...

Making it snappy:
Sarah modelling
the use of a clicker
with PowerPoint.



'Our outcomes went up by 10% last summer and I can't wait to see the impact long term!'

By Laura Kay

Lead Practitioner for
Personal Development

Oxford Spires
Academy



‘Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That’s why it’s so hard.’ David McCullough.

Writing is one of the most challenging skills we learn - from forming letters to writing dissertations, writing is tough. As students move up into secondary their focus moves away from the creative writing they know from primary school to the academic essay. This style of writing demands students examine and evaluate a topic, whether that be Shakespeare’s use of symbolism in Macbeth or the application of Buddhist teachings to modern day life. Thus, engaging in the daunting process of committing their knowledge, opinions and interpretations to the permanent state of ink and paper.

Interdisciplinary ink: Transforming subject knowledge into methodical masterpieces

The Department for Education (2012) highlights how students’ confidence in their writing abilities only decreases as they get older. This downward trend has long been battled against in the individual department offices of every English and Humanities office in every secondary school across the country. However,

at Oxford Spires Academy we are taking a different approach, bringing together Humanities and English for a shared strategy in Key Stage 3.

A revolutionary approach

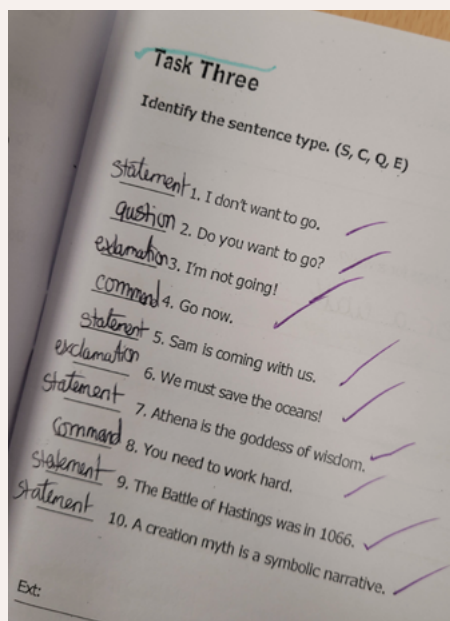
In our English lessons students have one lesson a week focussed on writing subject knowledge essays. We are explicitly teaching our students how to use appositive phrases, how to write topic sentences, how to construct introductions and a variety of other skills crucial to essay writing. These skills are then revisited in their Humanities lessons and applied to their specific topic. These lessons have been deliberately modelled on the teachings of Hochman and Wexler from their book *The Writing Revolution*.

This shared writing approach also carries into their assessment. All Key Stage 3 students across English and Humanities complete subject knowledge essays. Students are given a lesson to plan their essays using a planning sheet which focuses on the key skills they have learned during their writing lessons. The mark schemes are consistent across English and Humanities and assesses subject knowledge, organisation and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Having consistent mark schemes for essays in both English and Humanities ensures fairness and clarity in assessment. Students receive feedback on their writing skills and subject knowledge across disciplines, facilitating a holistic approach to their academic development.

Lightening the (cognitive) load

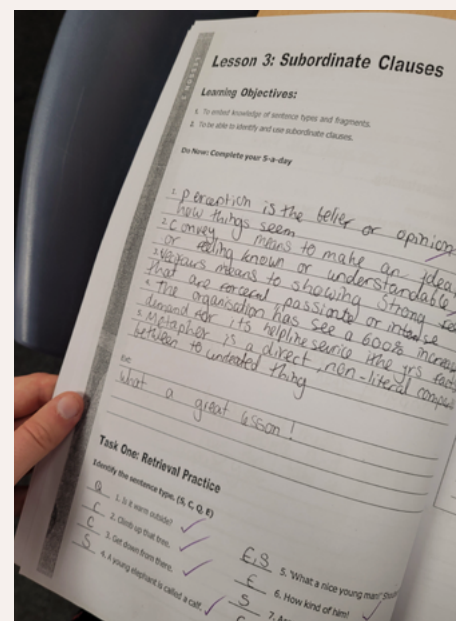
By providing consistent instruction and assessment criteria across both English and Humanities subjects, we can reduce the extraneous cognitive load associated with learning different writing formats or criteria for each subject. Students can focus their cognitive resources on mastering the writing skills and subject knowledge without being burdened by unnecessary variations in expectations.

When students learn to write essays using specific techniques in English class and then apply those skills to express their understanding of Humanities topics, they begin to see the broader applicability of these skills.



Above: Examples of transferable writing techniques.

Below: A proud student shows off their essay!



This transferability encourages students to see their writing abilities beyond the confines of a single subject.

We are already starting to see the results of this strategy through assessment week. Our students have reported feeling more confident going into their assessments and have significantly improved their writing ability and capacity.

Overall, this strategy leaves us in no doubt that implementing a comprehensive writing curriculum that spans across subjects ensures that every student, regardless of their background or abilities, has access to high-quality instruction in writing skills.



‘By providing consistent instruction and assessment criteria... we can reduce the extraneous cognitive load...’

By Bethany Lanham

Lead Coach

St Mark's Academy



During the last academic year, a key priority for St Mark's Academy was increasing extended writing across Key Stage 3. After visiting Anthem primary schools, Judith Kerr Primary and All Saints Juniors, we were blown away by the amount of writing students were completing, even in Year 4 History and Geography lessons.

We knew we had to increase the rigour of our KS3 curriculum to ensure students were keeping up their writing stamina, limiting the disadvantage gap which widens from Year 7-9.

Scaffolding to build thinking habits in KS3

We explored the types of scaffolding being used to support extended writing at Key Stage 2 and noted that students were being supported by 'structure strips' or essay planning grids, along with some incredible talk for writing 'story mapping' going on in science. We were also guided and inspired by the links in The Anthem Way practice guides for WE DO and Scaffold and challenge and guided by the Anthem Curriculum Principles.

'Thinking about thinking'

The EEF defines scaffolding as 'a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it

is no longer required,' providing 'enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not yet do independently' (2023). At SMA, we were thinking about metacognition, or 'thinking about thinking', and wanted to ensure that our scaffolds didn't become a 'crutch' which limited students' thought process. Therefore, when designing our scaffolds with metacognition in mind, we wanted to ensure that they promoted students' thinking about the process they were undertaking, supporting them to complete this process independently when the scaffold is removed.

In the English department, we had already moved away from sentence starters to 'metacognitive questions' in Key Stage 4, in the hope that this would improve student outcomes, by giving them the questions great English students ask themselves while promoting long-term independence as students gradually learnt these questions themselves. We now wanted to build on this at KS3 by supporting students to write longer pieces of writing while being challenged to think hard about the learning they were completing.

I blended these two approaches to create an essay planning scaffold (see pictures). I hoped this would keep students within their 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978) and wanted the resource to be gradually removable to move students towards greater independence. Therefore, I

created a scaffolding grid which had questions rather than prompts, familiarising students with the thought process they had to take and the questions they had to ask themselves when planning and writing essays. I deliberately designed it to be usable across all English topics in order to build student familiarity with the process and remind them that essay planning is the same skill across different texts.

Learning to fly

In Year 9 lessons, the scaffolding grid was noted to have a clear impact on students. We immediately noticed students writing more and the majority of the class no longer needed sentence starters or additional support during extended writing. The quality of writing had also improved, as students were able to develop their own ideas rather than relying on teacher modelling. As the year progressed, we were able to gradually remove some of the support the grid gave, and by the end of the year, most students were able to independently plan a clear thesis and a three-point plan with supporting evidence. We saw the impact of this in end of year exams where students had well-structured essays following a logical argument.

This has also had an impact across KS3 teaching, after we presented to the whole school encouraging teachers to use scaffolds which are designed to be removed. Since this CPD session, we have seen an increase in extended writing across humanities books and less

In the zone:
Examples of
Bethany's
essay planning
scaffolds for
KS3 students.

| How are Romeo's feelings for Juliet presented in Act 2.2? | |
|---|---|
| CF | Shakespeare's use of a light motif in Romeo's language presents his feelings for Juliet as.... |
| SR/AQ | By comparing her....., Romeo conveys his feelings as _____ because..... |
| WT/Z | The [word/phrase/ technique] " _____ " suggests..... |
| AI | Shakespeare extends the use of light imagery when..... |
| CON | Romeo's devotion to Juliet provides a contrast to typical Elizabethan relationships because.... |
| WM | In this way, Shakespeare presents his feelings for her as.... |

| English KS3 'Thinking Guide' | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Structuring a paragraph: | |
| A01 WHAT? | Clear topic sentence: What is the writer presenting or character saying? • How could I reuse the words in the question to give myself a topic sentence? |
| A02 HOW? | How does the writer convey/ present/ develop this?: • What tone is the quotation spoken in or narrated in? Why did the writer choose this tone? • Powerful words: Which words or techniques convey the most meaning? • What different connotations do these words have? What do they make you imagine, think about or feel? |
| A03 WHY? | Why does the writer write it? • Consider context and impact: what attitudes are revealed? • Is the writer trying to create shock or sympathy/ to expose or criticise/, to warn or to promote an attitude or feeling? • Remember to link back to the key words of the question here. |

sentence starters being used in lessons. In History lessons, they have adopted the practice of 'using the question to write your first sentence' alongside using metacognitive questions to guide students through the process of writing a paragraph.

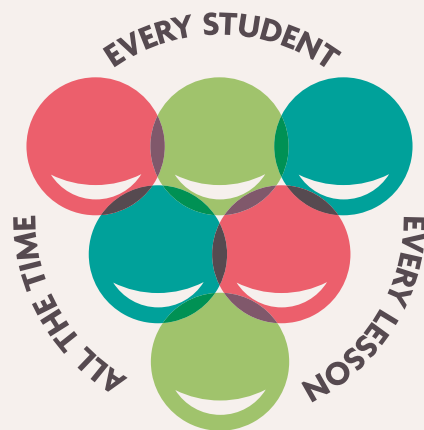
Ofsted also commended this approach in our May inspection and commented on the consistency of writing across student groups – the books, and therefore the progress made by disadvantaged and students with SEND, were in line with non-disadvantaged students and students without SEND.

For us, in our outcomes, student voice and during lesson drop-ins the impact of scaffolding is clear!

SCAFFOLDING CHECKLIST

Questions to ask yourself when designing scaffolds. Does it:

- Break a complex task down into manageable chunks?
- Get students to actively engage in the process and think about each step?
- Enable you to gradually remove sections or 'fade out' the scaffolding?
- Use metacognitive questions to support deeper thinking and independence?



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