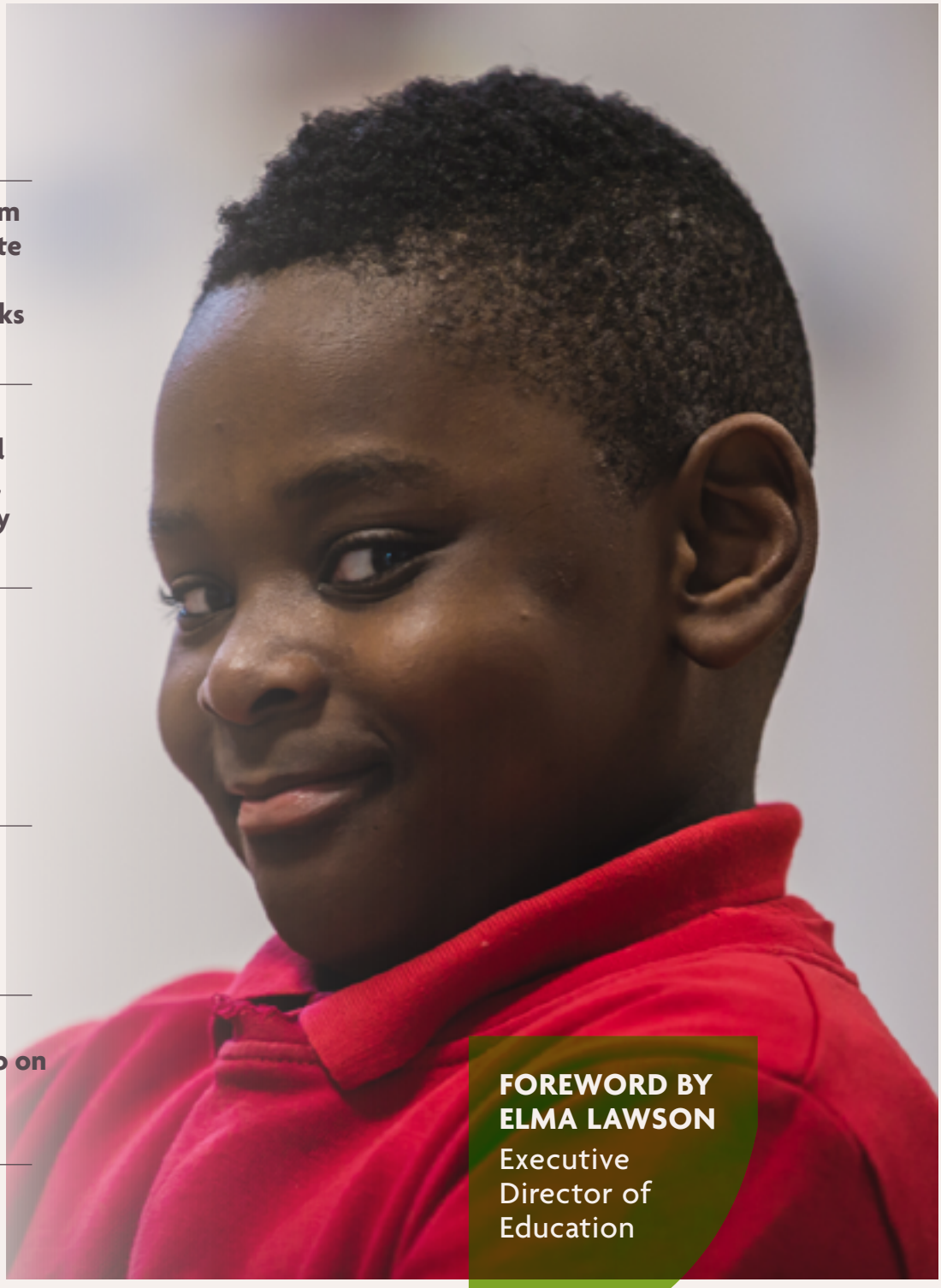
ANTHEM CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY JOURNAL • ISSUE 6 • AUTUMN 2026

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FOREWORD BY ELMA LAWSON
Executive Director of Education

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By Elma Lawson

Executive Director of Education

Anthem Schools Trust



Every student, every lesson, all the time

A child's background should never determine the quality of education they receive, the aspirations they hold or the opportunities available to them when they leave our schools.

Welcome to the Autumn 2026 edition of Versed. This edition marks an unashamed return to the publication's original purpose: a focus on pedagogy and the practical work of improving teaching. It is what happens in classrooms, lesson after lesson, that ultimately transforms outcomes and life chances for our students.

Our Phase 2 Education Strategy (2026-2029) retains our commitment to inclusion and to ensuring every student experiences an exceptional curriculum, taught by a great teacher and led by strong, inspirational leaders. It places inclusive education at the centre of our improvement work, supported through the continued development of The Anthem Way, instructional coaching and deliberate practice. Whilst standards across our schools continue to rise, we know that too many of our most vulnerable students still face barriers to success. The disadvantage gap remains, and we will not rest until it is significantly reduced.

Every student should feel that education is for them. Recent national research into white working-class educational outcomes has highlighted that too many young people experience education as something designed for others rather than for people like them. Alongside our work to improve outcomes for students with SEND and those eligible for Pupil Premium, this reminds us that belonging, trust, confidence and recognition matter as much as attainment. Educational gaps emerge early and widen over time, making it essential that schools act deliberately to address them. For us, this is ultimately a matter of social justice and social mobility.

Our ambition is that students develop the knowledge, skills, character and cultural capital that enable them to flourish in the next stage of education, employment and adult life. This means creating classrooms where ambition is high, relationships are strong and teaching is expertly adapted. It means valuing the strengths, identities and experiences that every student brings with them whilst remaining relentlessly ambitious for what they can achieve. Inclusion is not something that sits alongside school improvement; it is at the core of everything we do.

The Anthem Way is our shared framework that connects curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Our behaviour, relationships and routines strand supports our work on belonging, while StepLab action steps and linked videos strengthen teachers' ability to create classrooms in which all students participate and succeed. Through instructional coaching and deliberate practice, we continue to develop teacher expertise, enabling colleagues to remove barriers to learning and secure excellent outcomes for every student.

The articles in this edition show what expert professional development looks like in practice across our Trust. At St Mark's Academy, Hannah Partis explains how deliberate practice and StepLab are helping colleagues turn professional learning into dependable classroom habits. At Abacus, colleagues explore how targeted professional development supports teachers to strengthen the specific habits they need most. At Grampian, Head Teacher Paul Carpenter demonstrates how carefully sequenced coaching helps bridge the gap between knowing and doing. At The Deepings School, Paul Crisp and his team show how a sharp focus on participation is increasing student thinking, contribution and engagement. At Oxford Spires Academy, Harriet Bellamy shares the school's Scholarship Reading programme, which combines academic ambition with carefully planned support through its principle of "high challenge with low threat".

"Small, deliberate improvements in teaching practice accumulate over time to create significant gains for students."

Versed celebrates teaching as a complex yet profoundly important profession. If we are serious about every student, every lesson, all the time, we must remain equally serious about what teachers know, what they do and how we support them to improve. We must also ensure that every student feels they belong and believes success is possible. This all leads to wonderfully impactful teaching, where we are creating the conditions for greater equity and stronger social mobility for every student that we have the privilege of serving.

That is the work that will make the greatest difference.

By Hannah Partis

Director of Humanities, Quality of Education Team and StepLab Lead

St Marks



From CPD to classroom habits: using deliberate practice to build consistency at St Marks

At St Marks, our approach to professional development this year has started from a simple premise: CPD only makes a difference if it changes what teachers routinely do in classrooms.

We have used StepLab since 2021, but this September we deliberately relaunched our approach. Previously, coaching largely operated on a two-week peer-to-peer cycle, with individual teachers potentially working on different aspects of their practice. Although valuable for individuals, we recognised that this did not necessarily create the collective improvement or consistency we wanted across the school.

Influenced by the trust Steplab training in June, our new model is based on the idea of "**swing**": everybody working carefully on the same high-leverage aspects of teaching so that small improvements in individual practice accumulate into meaningful whole-school change. Rather than introducing numerous strategies at once, we identify a small number of precise teaching habits and give colleagues repeated opportunities to learn, practise, see and refine them.

We began with something deceptively simple: **insisting on attention before giving an instruction**. Staff came together for deliberate practice, rehearsing the use of "3, 2, 1" followed by silence and a deliberate pause before speaking. The following week built on this through positive narration when expectations had been met. This sequence matters. We are deliberately securing the conditions for learning first, before moving towards more complex aspects of pedagogy such as questioning and independent practice.

Crucially, rehearsal is not separate from implementation. Staff were asked to complete at least one StepLab drop-in, allowing colleagues to see the strategy being used in real classrooms. Peer-to-peer coaching then gives staff further opportunities to practise and refine the same identified steps. StepLab therefore provides a thread running from **CPD, to rehearsal, to classroom implementation, to feedback and further practice**.

This links strongly to **The Anthem Way** because we are building predictable classrooms in which established routines support learning. We have also worked hard to ensure staff understand why consistency matters. In our



CPD, we used the experiences of individual students, including students with SEND who thrive when classroom expectations are predictable. If a student hears the same cue across different classrooms and immediately understands what is expected, consistency reduces cognitive and emotional load and makes it easier to focus on learning.

One important lesson has been the value of **rehearsal**. Our quality assurance prior to September suggested that, although teachers were visiting classrooms and coaching was established, rehearsal had been less systematically embedded. Deliberate practice creates a safe space where teachers can try a strategy, receive feedback, and repeat it before being expected to execute it fluently in the classroom.

Our next steps will intentionally be responsive rather than predetermined. After each cycle, we will use evidence from drop-ins and coaching to decide whether a habit is sufficiently embedded to move on or whether further practice is needed. This is not about creating identical teachers or robotic classrooms. It is about establishing a small number of dependable habits that make classrooms safer, more predictable and more conducive to learning for every student – it's the Peps Mcrea line from the Anthem Way, structure liberates!

"One important lesson has been the value of rehearsal."



By Paul Carpenter

Headteacher

Grampian Primary Academy



Building a Coherent Model of Professional Development

Habits, Expertise, Consistency

In the previous article, colleagues at St Mark's explored how the principles of '*Swing*' and '*Structure Liberates*' informed their approach to professional development. At Grampian Primary Academy, those ideas resonated strongly with our own thinking. Through the co-construction of the Grampian Way, we have worked to establish a shared approach to routines, learning behaviours and classroom practice that creates consistency for students whilst supporting continual professional growth for staff.

Our approach is underpinned by a simple belief: professional development has the greatest impact when it changes what teachers routinely do in classrooms. To support this, we have developed a three-tier model that combines deliberate practice, instructional coaching and whole-school alignment.

At its simplest:

- **Tier 1 develops habits.**
- **Tier 2 builds expertise.**
- **Tier 3 creates consistency.**

Together, these strands connect professional learning, classroom implementation and student experience.

Starting with Why

What teachers know and do makes more difference to student outcomes than anything else we can change (Coe and Kime, 2021). Therefore, the challenge for schools is not whether professional development matters, but how to ensure it leads to sustained improvements in classroom practice that benefit '*Every Student, Every Lesson, All the Time*'.

Teaching is Complex

Peps McCrea describes teaching as one of the most "fiendishly complex" jobs ever invented, taking place within a "wicked learning environment", where feedback is delayed, incomplete or difficult to interpret. Every lesson requires teachers to make countless decisions about curriculum, communication, behaviour, relationships, assessment and adaptation, often simultaneously and in real time. The cognitive load of this complexity presents a challenge for professional development. We must provide teachers with structured opportunities to refine their practice, challenge assumptions and develop expertise over time.

The Infinite Game
Regardless of experience, every teacher begins the academic year with the same challenge: creating the conditions in which a new class of students can thrive. We therefore deliberately sequence our professional development to begin with culture for learning, supported by the Grampian Way and the shared routines, expectations and behaviours that underpin successful classrooms. As these foundations become established, our focus shifts towards securing attention, optimising communication and driving hard thinking, linked to StepLabs Simple Model of Teaching. Later in the year, attention turns to feedback, identifying gaps in understanding and ensuring learning is consolidated.

The Knowing-Doing Gap
Knowing what effective teaching looks like does not automatically lead to changes in classroom practice. Professional development is often successful at building knowledge but less successful at changing habits. At Grampian, coaching acts as the bridge between learning and implementation. Through sustained professional dialogue, deliberate practice and focused action steps, colleagues are supported to close the knowing-doing gap between understanding effective teaching and consistently implementing it. As David Weston and Bridget Clay describe, effective coaching is built upon dialogue, reflection and relationships. These principles underpin our approach and ensure that professional learning translates into meaningful improvements in the classroom.



"Knowing what effective teaching looks like does not automatically lead to changes in classroom practice."

The Response: Habits, Expertise and Consistency

To achieve this, we developed a three-tier professional development model. Tier 1 focuses on developing habits through deliberate practice and implementation; Tier 2 deepens professional expertise through evidence-informed learning; and Tier 3 creates consistency through shared routines and habit formation across the school community.

Tier 1: Developing Habits
Our first tier consists of *Sip, Share, Strengthen* sessions. Delivered before school at 8:15am and alternating between Tuesday and Thursday mornings to accommodate different working patterns, these thirty-minute sessions provide regular opportunities for focused professional learning. Staff have responded particularly positively to the timing and format, recognising the impact on both accessibility and workload.

Each session follows a deliberate structure. Colleagues reflect on previous implementation before a clear action step is introduced. Success criteria are explicitly identified, leaders model and staff rehearse the action step with peers before providing feedback to one another. The process draws heavily upon *Leverage Leadership's* "See It, Name It, Do It" approach. The emphasis is not simply on understanding a teaching strategy, but on rehearsing it until implementation becomes increasingly fluent and effective. After all, you wouldn't get on a plane with a pilot who'd been shown how to fly but never rehearsed.

Staff then commit to implementing the action step. Over the following ten-day period, peer drop-ins provide opportunities to observe implementation in practice, whilst leaders use the same focus during classroom visits and learning walks. Effective implementation is recognised through regular shout-outs, reinforcing success and celebrating professional growth across the school.

Tier 2: Building Expertise
Whilst Tier 1 focuses on developing habits, Tier 2 is designed to deepen professional expertise.

Delivered through our weekly Wednesday professional development programme, this strand follows a carefully sequenced professional learning curriculum built around a clear golden thread. Last year, this centred on explicit teaching and was informed by *Just Tell Them*. This year, our focus is adaptive teaching, drawing upon *Planning for Adaptive Teaching*.

Rather than introducing multiple initiatives, we explore a small number of evidence-informed principles in depth. Staff are first introduced to the overarching concept before identifying its active ingredients. Follow-up sessions then explore what these principles look like in different curriculum subjects.

For example, when examining the alternating principle within explicit teaching, colleagues explored how the same underlying principle might be applied differently within mathematics, science, history and religious education. This subject-specific approach helps teachers move beyond surface-level understanding and towards deeper professional expertise.

Tier 3: Creating Consistency
Every Monday, the whole school gathers for a habit assembly led by the headteacher. These assemblies focus on a specific element of the Grampian Way, often linked to learning behaviours, routines or key classroom commands. Success criteria are explicitly modelled before students have opportunities to rehearse and practise the habit together. Teachers revisit the same focus within classrooms, and the habit becomes a celebration focus throughout the week.

The process intentionally mirrors the professional development experienced by staff. Just as teachers benefit from modelling, rehearsal and feedback, so too do students.

This creates powerful alignment between adult learning and student learning. The routines being explored within professional development sessions are reinforced through assemblies, practised in classrooms and celebrated across the school community.

Why This Matters

Ultimately, effective professional development is not about helping teachers learn something new. It is about creating the conditions in which teachers can continually refine their craft and students can experience the very best learning opportunities possible. When professional development is coherent, deliberate and sustained over time, improvement becomes not an event, but part of the culture of the school.

For us, the Grampian Way provides the shared foundation; coaching bridges learning and implementation; Tier 1 develops habits; Tier 2 builds expertise; and Tier 3 creates consistency. Together, these elements create the conditions for continual improvement, ensuring that professional development is not something staff attend, but something they actively engage with throughout the year.



"Just as teachers benefit from modelling, rehearsal and feedback, so too do students."



By Paul Crisp

Deputy Headteacher

The Deepings School



Transforming Participation: How The Deepings School are ensuring Every Student Thinks

At The Deepings School, one of our key priorities since September has been to maximise the number of students who are actively thinking, participating and contributing during lessons.

Too often in classrooms, a small number of pupils can dominate discussion while others remain passive. We wanted to create a culture where every student is expected to think hard, engage fully and contribute to learning. This work aligns strongly with our Deepings *Ambition* value, our school focus on belonging strands and with The Anthem Way.

Our whole-school focus this year is ensuring all pupils feel included while *being challenged to achieve highly*.

From September, the leadership team introduced three core participation strategies that teachers were expected to apply consistently but intelligently across classrooms: **mini whiteboards, cold calling and turn-and-talk (think-pair-share)**. As implementation developed, we added a fourth strategy, **probing questions**, to deepen students' thinking. We chose these approaches because they are simple, evidence-informed techniques that significantly increase participation and hold students to account for engagement. They also build on our previous focus on inclusive and responsive teaching.

Implementation centred on high-quality professional development via CPD, lesson drop-ins and coaching. Staff CPD sessions used lesson footage, deliberate practice and professional discussion to be explicit about what effective participation looks like in practice. Teachers explored the precise routines that make these strategies successful. For example, with mini whiteboards, staff focused on securing participation from every student through clear routines, active circulation and accountability for thinking. With turn-and-talk, teachers refined how they structured paired discussion so that every pupil contributed rather than relying on the most confident voices. Cold calling was developed to ensure all students remained cognitively engaged because they did not know who would be asked to respond. In line with our inclusive, relational approach, teachers were supported to build in thinking time for students who struggle with cold calling.

The impact has been significant. During a recent CRD, the team emphasised that the impact of the CPD programme was "very clear". The three participation strategies introduced at the



start of the year were evident in almost every classroom visited and were being implemented effectively by the vast majority of teachers. Their overall conclusion was powerful: more students are thinking and participating than ever before. Similarly, our own lesson drop ins found much less passivity in classrooms and greater engagement from students across the school.

Importantly, this success has created the conditions for the next phase of improvement. At the CRD we recognised the strong culture around teaching and learning that has been established and we identified an opportunity to move further beyond implementation and compliance towards refinement and mastery. As participation becomes routine, our attention is shifting towards the quality of students' thinking and the prompts that we give them to scaffold thinking purposefully.

This led directly to our most recent CPD focus on probing questions. Once students were participating more frequently, we wanted teachers to help them think more deeply by asking questions such as, "Why did you choose that answer?" or "What evidence supports your thinking?" These simple follow-up questions increase challenge, improve accountability and encourage students to engage with subject knowledge at a much more sophisticated level.

A key part of our approach to embed the strategies has been the use of typicality tracking, responsive coaching and instructional coaching through Steplab. We are now building deliberate practice into all CPD sessions to more effectively build teacher habits. Monitoring information is used to identify strengths, respond to patterns and shape future CPD for both groups and individual teachers. This has enabled professional development to move beyond one-off training sessions and become an ongoing cycle of practice, feedback and improvement.

The biggest lesson we have learned is that participation does not happen by accident. It requires carefully designed routines, consistent expectations and sustained coaching. Our next step is to continue refining questioning, developing subject-specific approaches and supporting students to engage in increasingly challenging academic thinking. The Anthem Way practice guides on deliberate questioning and literacy and oracy have helped shape this, as has our work on the KS3 strategy via CAP briefings. We have spotted an opportunity to bring together the work of the pastoral team with the academic team and to be transparent with students about the strategies that we are using and why through assemblies and a 'scholarly behaviours' curriculum. The result will be a classroom culture where every voice matters, every student is expected to participate and learning is becoming more ambitious than ever.

"Participation does not happen by accident."



Exposing students to rich texts at Oxford Spires Academy

By Harriet Bellamy

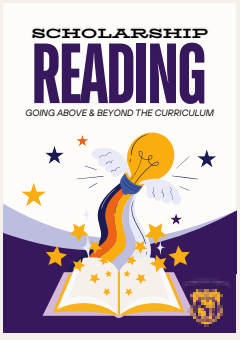
Senior Deputy Headteacher

Oxford Spires Academy



At Oxford Spires Academy, we are committed to fulfilling the Anthem KS3 Manifesto and making Key Stage 3 the "ambitious years" by providing students with a challenging, meaningful, and academically rich educational experience from the moment they join us in Year 7.

Since access to rich texts is included in the Anthem curriculum principles and following the summer leadership conference session with Mary Myatt, we decided to trial the introduction of texts to use in Y7 homework. We wanted to introduce home learning which broadened horizons, reflected our ambition and which was directly applicable inside and outside the classroom. To support this vision our initiative is called **Scholarship Reading**, a programme designed to develop students' curiosity, reading ability and academic confidence across all subjects.



The Scholarship Reading programme has been created in response to an important question: how can homework be used more effectively to reinforce learning and promote academic rigour? While our curriculum, lesson content and Scholar's Guides already encourage ambitious learning, we recognised that homework could be better aligned with these goals. Research and experience show that traditional homework can sometimes create barriers for students rather than support learning. With the global rise in students using AI to complete homework, we wanted a solution that made homework meaningful, supported our curricular approach, and aligned with The Anthem Way. Reading has the power to unlock success across every subject and broaden students' understanding of the world around them and can't be shortcut easily by AI!

The underlying philosophy of the programme is simple: success comes through hard work, perseverance, learning and study. Students should be challenged intellectually and encouraged to engage with demanding ideas from an early age. Rather than limiting young people to simplified materials, we believe they should encounter the kind of ambitious content that inspires curiosity and develops higher-level thinking.

Scholarship Reading takes the form of a booklet containing carefully selected academic articles linked to each subject studied during the curriculum cycle. Each week, students will read a subject-specific text that connects directly to the content they are learning in lessons and through their Scholar's Guide. These readings will expose students to new concepts, specialist vocabulary and academic discussions beyond the standard curriculum.

"Your task is not to get every answer perfect."



Here is the key messaging given to students:

Every week, you will be asked to read a short article chosen by one of your teachers. These are not ordinary reading tasks. They have been selected because they are interesting, challenging and thought-provoking, helping you to think like a true scholar. You may find some of the texts difficult at first, and that is completely normal. In fact, they are meant to be challenging. Many of the ideas and extracts you will encounter are inspired by the kinds of texts older students, and sometimes even university students, might read. Remember: if learning feels easy all the time, we are probably not stretching ourselves enough.

Your task is not to get every answer perfect. Instead, it is to engage with the text, wrestle with challenging ideas and come to lessons ready to discuss them. Throughout the term, your teachers will dedicate time to exploring these readings together through debate, discussion and questioning. These conversations will help you develop your understanding and confidence. Reading is one of the most powerful tools you can use to succeed in school and beyond. The more you read, the more knowledge you gain, the richer your vocabulary becomes, and the more confidently you can express your ideas. Most importantly, reading opens doors to new ways of thinking.

An example of the types of texts provided are: An abridged extract from Marcus Du Sautoy at Oxford University entitled : *Blueprints: How Mathematics Shapes Creativity 2025*, A New Scientist article on the effects of AI. A GCSE Level science article on paleo research.

A key principle of the initiative is providing **high challenge with low threat**. Students may encounter articles that are typically read by older students or even undergraduates. However, they are not expected to understand every detail independently. If a text feels difficult, students will be reassured that the purpose is to stretch their thinking rather than test their ability. Teachers will revisit the ideas raised in the readings during lessons, using discussion and guided support to help students access complex material.

This approach reflects our belief that children are fascinated by "grown-up knowledge" and feel empowered when trusted with sophisticated ideas. By exposing students to ambitious texts, we communicate high expectations and demonstrate our belief in their potential.

Each Scholarship Reading task will include three elements: a description of **what** the text is about, **why** it matters and a short **summary** activity. Texts will be engaging, no longer than two sides of A4 and closely linked to curriculum content.

Importantly, Scholarship Reading will become the primary homework task for Year 7 students alongside SPARX, ensuring a clear and consistent approach across the school.

Through Scholarship Reading, Oxford Spires Academy aims to develop confident readers, independent thinkers and academically ambitious learners. By making reading the centre of our homework provision, we are giving our new Year 7 students the knowledge, skills and curiosity they need to thrive both in school and beyond.

Early indications and student voice indicates that students enjoy the challenge and behaviour points for lack of completion of homework in Y7 is far lower than at this point last academic year. Our next steps are around developing staff pedagogy around whole class reading. We have done this historically via the Anthem literacy strategy, embedding use of reading rulers, and staff reading aloud to model tone and expression for example; but want to revisit this using current research championed by Mary Myatt.

"Children are fascinated by 'grown-up knowledge'"



By Laura Grainger

Director of Secondary Standards

Anthem Schools Trust



Throughout this edition of *Versed*, we have explored the thinking, leadership and structures that sit behind great professional development. We have looked at how coaching can become part of the culture of a school and how Steplab can help us move from good intentions to deliberate, sustained improvement.

Teacher testimonials: The impact of Steplab on classroom practice

But ultimately, coaching matters because of what happens next, in classrooms, with teachers and students.

The Anthem Way gives us a shared language for expert teaching, grounded in the belief that we can make a difference for **every student, every lesson, all the time**. It also recognises something equally important: however experienced or accomplished we are, there is always something about our practice that we can make just a little bit better. Coaching is not about fixing people, nor is professional development something we ever simply finish. It is about recognising that all of us, including our most experienced and effective colleagues, can keep learning and refining.

So it feels fitting to finish this edition by handing the story over to our teachers. Their reflections take us to the most granular level of professional development: a carefully chosen action step; a conversation with a coach; some deliberate practice; trying something in the classroom; reflecting, refining and trying again. This is where Steplab and coaching really come alive.

Anthem's ambition is that teachers continually improve through expert coaching, deliberate practice and continuous improvement. Small action steps practised over and over eventually become part of the way a teacher teaches.

What follows is worth celebrating. These may appear to be small changes to individual practice, but multiplied across classrooms, schools and our Trust, their potential impact is enormous. This is The Anthem Way in action: colleagues learning with and from one another, continually getting better, and always keeping the students we serve at the heart of why we do it.

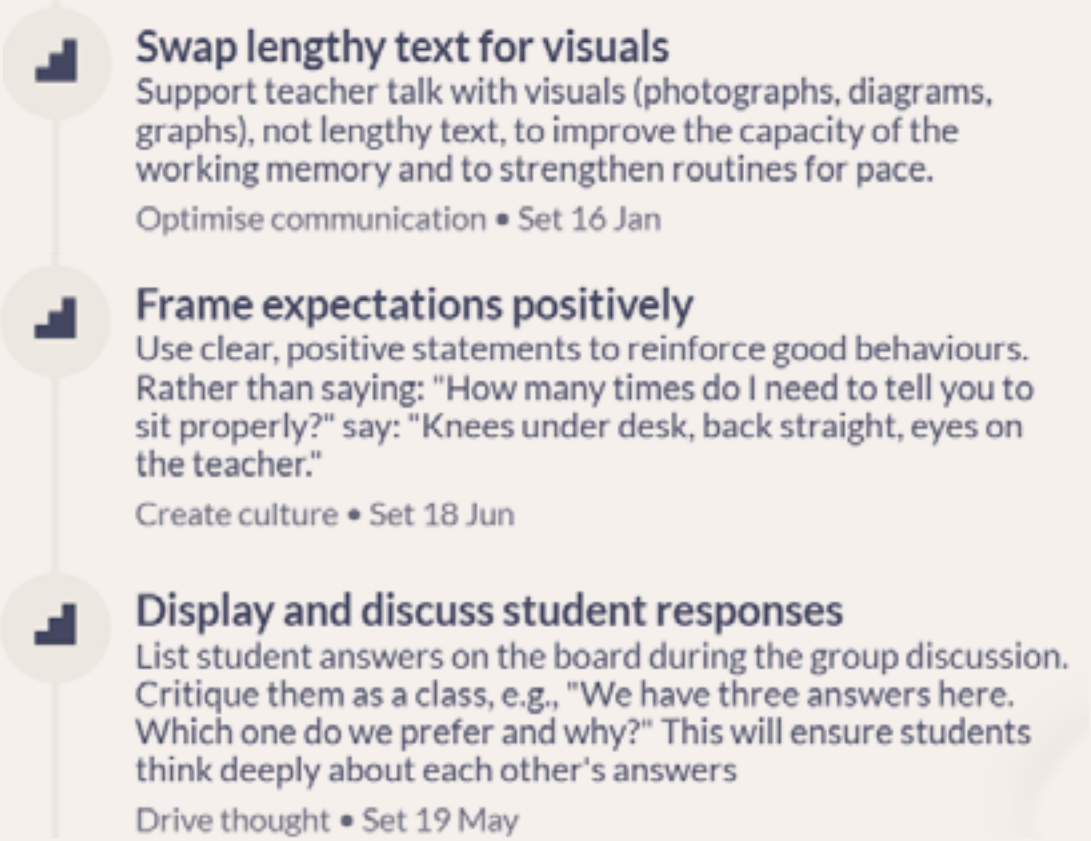
These testimonials are a wonderful reminder that behind every Steplab action step is a teacher thinking hard about their craft, a coach investing in a colleague and, most importantly, students experiencing stronger teaching as a result. That feels like exactly the right note on which to end this edition of *Versed*.

Ella Warby (ECT 1) – Abacus Belsize Primary School

Coaching through Steplab has helped me refine key aspects of my teaching by focusing on small, manageable improvements and embedding them into my daily practice. Last year, I worked with my coach on using mini-whiteboards more effectively to assess pupils' understanding throughout lessons, ensuring that every child was engaged and that I could quickly identify and address misconceptions. I also focused on improving scaffolding for lower-attaining pupils so they could work more independently through the use of carefully planned supports such as sentence stems, visual prompts, and vocabulary banks. Steplab enabled us to break these goals into actionable steps, practise specific techniques, and reflect on their impact. As a result, my teaching is now more responsive, assessment is more immediate and purposeful, and lower-attaining pupils are able to access learning with greater confidence and independence.

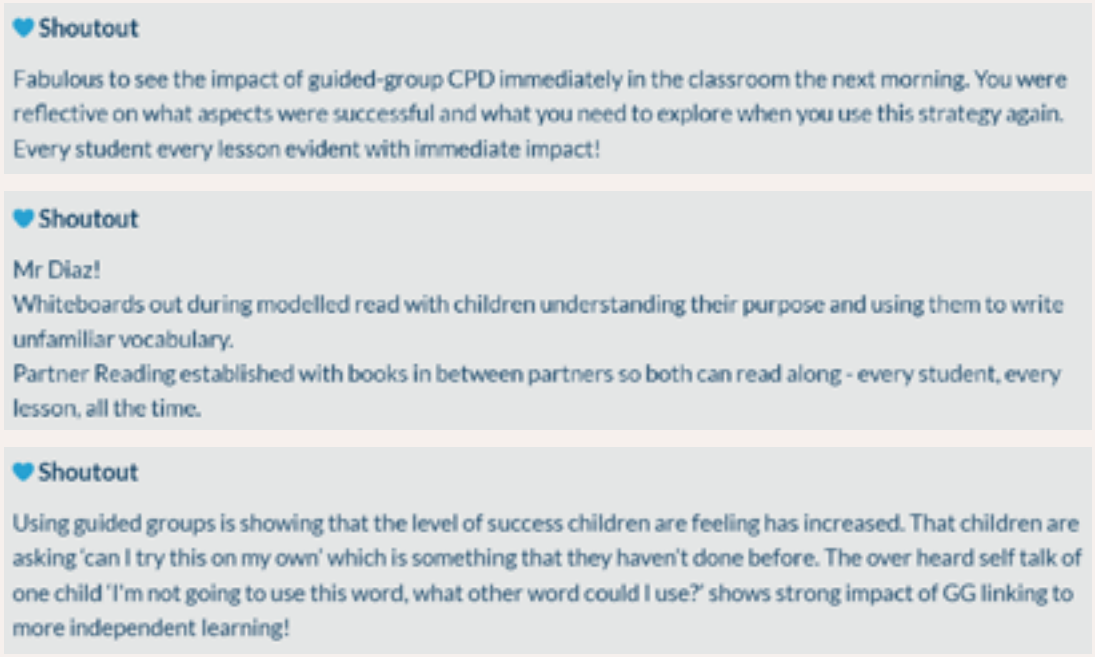
Becky Bowen (Middle leader) – Abacus Belsize Primary School

Coaching has had a significant impact on my practice because it felt collaborative, supportive and focused on improvement rather than judgement. Through observations, feedback and rehearsal with my coach, I was able to identify specific areas for development and practise new strategies before using them in class, which increased my confidence and consistency. One key focus was improving the structure of talking partner activities in a lively class. Together, we developed a simple routine where children had time to think independently before discussing with a partner and then returning quickly to whole-class learning through clear cues and positive behaviour narration. This created smoother transitions, improved pupil focus and engagement, and reduced the need to raise my voice to regain attention. The routine is now embedded across all my lessons and classes, providing a consistent structure that supports positive behaviour, confident discussion and effective learning.



Screenshots from shoutouts on Abacus

Screenshots from shoutouts on Abacus

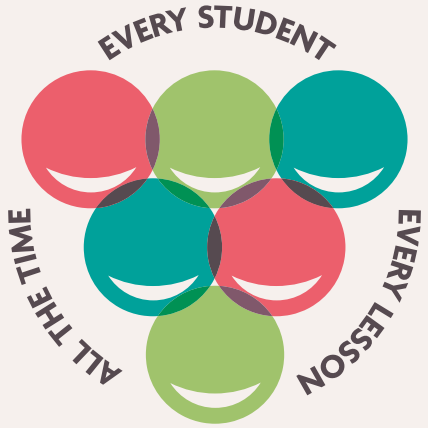


Nathania DaCosta (3rd year teacher) – Abacus Belsize Primary School

The StepLab coaching process has transformed my teaching because it encouraged me to focus on small, deliberate changes that could be practised and refined over time. One of my key targets was establishing stronger classroom routines through scripting them explicitly to my class. I also introduced a silent starter at the beginning of lessons, which has been particularly effective with my energetic and often "fizzy" class. This simple change has helped create a calmer start to learning and has improved pupils' readiness to engage with tasks. Another focus was using Think Pair Share to structure discussion. By making pupil talk more routine and purposeful, I have seen greater participation and more thoughtful responses from children who may previously have been reluctant to contribute. What I found most valuable about the coaching was its emphasis on mastering tiny steps rather than trying to change everything at once. Seeing how these small adjustments have become embedded in my practice has reinforced my belief that sustained improvement comes from consistency, reflection and incremental change, ultimately leading to a much greater impact on pupils' learning and behaviour.

Holly Lovell (experienced teacher) and SLT member – Abacus Belsize Primary School

Instructional coaching has helped me become a more reflective and intentional teacher. Being coached by my Headteacher was particularly valuable, as I benefited from the expertise of an experienced practitioner who provided precise feedback and practical guidance. We focused on a variety of areas, but the 2 most impactful were using high-quality visuals to replace unnecessary text to create guidelines in fluency lessons and reducing my reliance on hands-up questioning, a longstanding habit I wanted to break. Using StepLab, we worked on small, manageable action steps supported by observations, feedback and deliberate practice, allowing these strategies to become embedded in my day-to-day teaching. As a result, moving away from hands-up questioning has reduced passive learning in the classroom, as pupils can no longer opt out of thinking, and the use of cold calling helps to ensure that all pupils participate and remain accountable for their learning. Beyond the impact on my own classroom practice, the coaching has strengthened my role as Maths Fluency Leader, giving me concrete examples and strategies that I have been able to share with colleagues to support whole-school improvement.



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