Learning at Brookvale Groby Learning Campus

Work Hard, Be Kind

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

From August 2020

Introduction:

Our motto as a campus is 'Work Hard, Be Kind'. As exams at 16 and 18 are more demanding than ever, we know that the 'Work Hard' element of our motto is vital from the moment each student starts in Year 7.

We also know that teaching about our core values is vital to a student's success, because these build character which will carry all our students through the rest of their lives. Our character values are:

- *Self Control with learning (work hard)*
- *Self control with others (be kind)*
- *Social intelligence*
- *Gratitude*
- *Curiosity and creativity*
- *Zest*
- *Grit*
- *Growth mindset*

In order to meet these demands, we are developing a learning culture both on campus and at home in order to prepare our young people for their exams. This culture will also give them the skills they need to be successful throughout their future.

The curriculum experience for students at Brookvale Groby, and creating an effective learning environment for young people to thrive and succeed, is central to what we do as a campus. We spend a lot of time as teachers researching how best we can help students to learn and then we apply this in our classrooms and homework.

Our curriculum refers to the learning that happens both inside and outside the classroom. We have developed a broad and balanced academic curriculum, which is enriched by a range of additional opportunities in the form of clubs, experiences and trips.

Although students specialise more at Post 16, we challenge our students to keep a broad learning outlook by asking them to complete enrichment activities, subject mentoring and work experience.

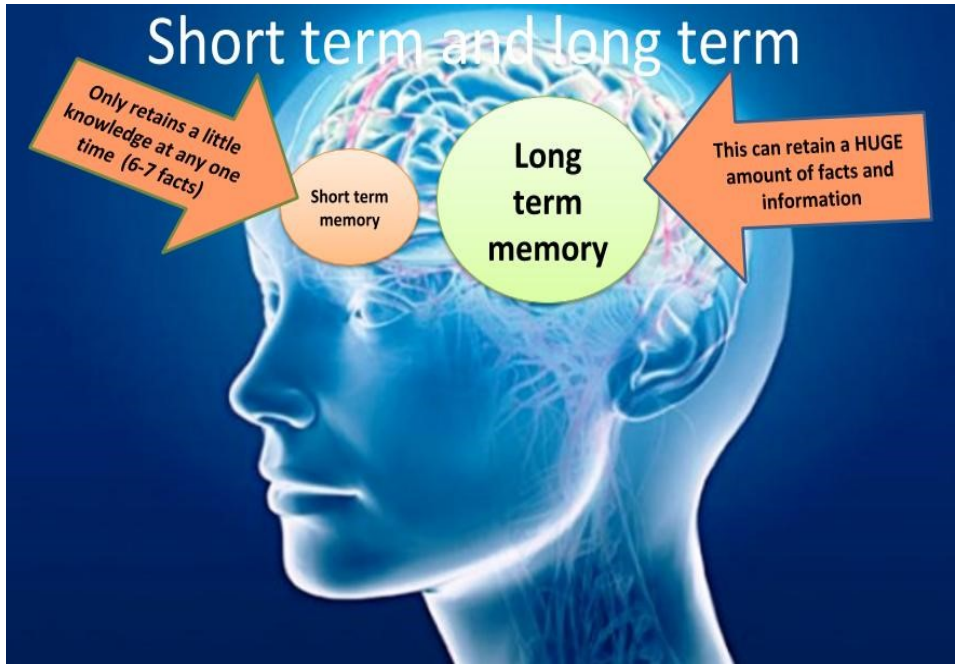
The curriculum has changed and we need to adapt to meet the needs of our learners.

Over the last few years, the formal curriculum we study in school has changed. Gone are the short modules examined throughout the school year. Instead, nearly every course is linear, which means that students learn the content over a long period and are examined at the end of 2 or more years.

Every course also has a greater depth of knowledge and content, or a higher level of skill requirement. Students need to know, in-depth, more content about a subject and retain it for longer. Their brains need to pull on a larger, broader and more in-depth body of knowledge, and pull it together in the pressurised conditions of an exam.

During the exams, students have many more papers to take and therefore they need to hold a huge bank of knowledge in their head. In other words, students have to be more skilled in learning and retaining lots of information for their exams.

In order to meet this challenge, we have changed our approach to learning which utilises the latest information about how the brain works in terms of memory power.



We have used the most current research to inform the changes in how we teach and how we want students to learn.

The latest research tells us more than ever about how the brain works in terms of retaining larger amounts of information. We have used three key pieces of research to inform our work:

1. Cognitive Load Theory:

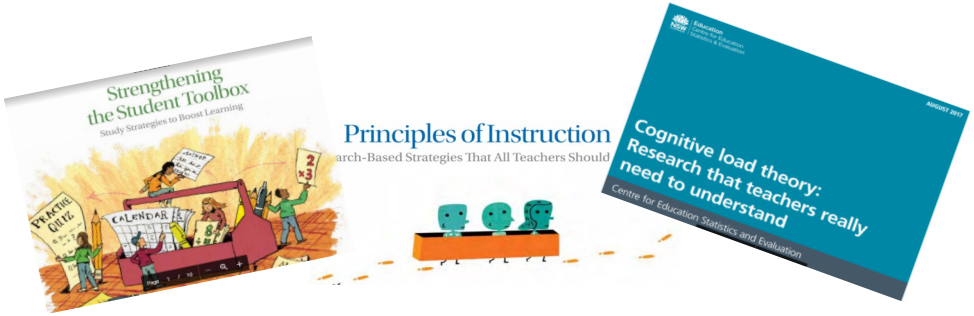
Cognitive Load Theory states that our working memory is limited in terms of capacity. We can only hold 6 or 7 facts at any one time in our short term memory. If we overload it with too much information in one go, and we don't understand it well, then we can't retain the information or we make mistakes when processing the information. If we only commit information to our short term memory, then we cannot be successful in these new exams. Knowledge needs to be presented in small chunks, learned thoroughly, and used to inform a wider understanding of topics and in problem solving, in order to move information from the limited space in our short term memory into the long term memory. Our long term memory has infinite capacity, where we can hold masses of information. The problem is, we have to start early committing the information into our long term memory.

2. Rosenshine's - Principles of Instruction:

Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction emphasises how our teachers need to break down learning in the classroom (in order to support cognitive load theory.) This includes beginning lessons with short reviews of previous learning, presenting new material in small steps, asking questions as you go along and providing high levels of practice for all students. This practice is modelled in the lessons and supported by frequent feedback throughout the lesson. Eventually, students are moved towards independent practice, but only after they are ready.

3. Dunlosky's - Strengthening the Student Toolbox:

Dunlosky challenges our traditional revision habits of highlighting, re-reading, and cramming for tests. Research shows that while these three strategies are commonly used, they have been ineffective in retaining information. Instead, Dunlosky has compiled a set of learning strategies that have proved successful and should be part of the "Student Toolbox" to boost learning. The top three strategies that Dunlosky recommends are: [1] Practice testing: self-testing or taking practice tests on to-be-learned material; [2] Distributed practice: implementing a schedule of practice that spreads out study activities over time rather than cramming for a test; and [3] Interleaved practice: implementing a schedule of practice that mixes different kinds of problems, or a schedule of study that mixes different kinds of material, within a single study session. All of these strategies help a student to retain more information ready for the bigger, linear exams.



This research has informed how we structure lessons on our campus.

• Almost every lesson, students will start with a 'do now' activity which tests knowledge from previous learning.

• Every module taught over a series of lessons will be supported by a 'Knowledge Organiser' which summarises the key information needed to understand the module.

• Students will be expected to self-test from their Knowledge Organisers every day so that they can begin to move the knowledge from their short term to their long term memory.

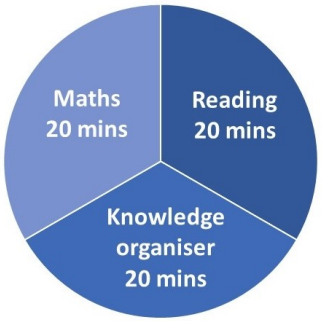
• The more a student revisits knowledge and self-tests at spaced intervals, the more likely they are to be able to pull the information from their long term to their short term memory.

• Our Subject Leaders and Teachers are organising modules within the curriculum so that students will learn a small section of a unit before moving onto another unit. They will then return to the first unit in a few weeks, where they will revise the content learned and then move on to the new section. This practice of breaking subjects into smaller chunks is called 'interleaving'. It may be quite normal for your child to be studying elements of the same unit across a school year, interspersed with other units.

We have high expectations of our students and their homework.

We know from research that homework for secondary school students improves a student's outcomes. We expect every student to engage in at least an hour of homework each day of the school week. As a student moves into Year 10 and 11, students will be set a wider range of homework tasks linked to examination success (wider revision, skill development for portfolio work, and exam practice).

Each school day, as a minimum, we expect each student in Years 7 to 11 to engage in the following:



• 20 minutes of reading

• 20 minutes of additional maths

• 20 minutes of self-testing from Knowledge Organisers which accompany every unit of work in Years 7 to 11.

Each school week, there may also be work set of a more practical nature.

Every student will have access to Knowledge Organisers on their subject Google Classrooms (students will be trained on how to use these) and they will use these everyday in school and at home. We expect every student in Year 7 to 11 to do at least 20 minutes of revision per weekday. To do this, they will have access to a Knowledge Organiser for every module in every subject. The Knowledge Organiser is a summary of the key information they need to know, in order for their brain to make sense of the topic being studied. We expect every student to learn this knowledge in small chunks over time, and commit it to their long term memory. Once this information is in the long term memory, they will be able to draw on it for future reference and when answering their exam questions.

To do this, we will expect every student to do the following:

• Keep written notes in their Organisers, which their Tutor checks every Monday in tutor time

• Students should expect to be quizzed on the content of Knowledge Organisers on a weekly basis.

• Students are encouraged to supplement their homework with other forms of subject revision, including the use of revision guides and exam questions (especially when in Year 11)

• Students will need to complete practical skills based homework, in addition, as required by their teachers. For example, they may be asked to complete coursework in an Arts or BTEC subject in Years 10 and 11.

• If students are given hard copies of their Knowledge Organisers or decide to print them out, it will be helpful to have an A4 Ring Binder in which to store their organisers.

• Each student will be issued with a Student Organiser at no charge, however, if it is lost, £2.50 will be charged for the replacement.

Reading everyday is important for long term learning.

The ability to read quickly and accurately is becoming increasingly important as students face a more challenging curriculum and tougher exams. In order to master new content and interpret questions skilfully, our students must have strong literacy skills.

Having learnt to read, our students need to read to learn. The benefits of regular reading can be seen across all curriculum areas. Regular readers are more able to read at speed, develop a broader vocabulary, and construct organised and detailed written responses.

To help meet this challenge, we expect each student to read for at least 20 minutes every evening.

Form Tutors, Librarians and English department staff will be happy to give advice about what to read. This homework will give them the skills to do so confidently.

Why additional maths practice everyday outside of school is so vital to long term success.

It is important that our students can see the role of mathematics in their daily lives. A good maths education will provide our students with the tools to understand, analyse, critique, and take action regarding important issues in our world.

In a world where technological advances are growing rapidly and tasks become more sophisticated, maths skills are becoming increasingly more important and are hugely sought after by employers.

To encourage student independence and problem solving skills, students will be required to engage with 20 minutes of maths every day, outside of school.

Students in Year 7, 8 and 9 will be set maths homework which will be checked by their maths teacher.

Students in KS4 will be allocated grade booster packs, and at times, supplementary tasks such as past papers, particularly in the lead up to exams.

How my child's work will be marked and what I should expect to see in their books and folders.

Marking and assessment has changed in recent years. You will see far less 'marking' in books than in previous years because we don't ask teachers to waste time on 'flick and tick' style checks. We want any marking completed by teachers to be useful to a student in helping them to make progress. When a teacher marks work it must be detailed and targeted, which enables the student to make improvements to their work.

At Brookvale Groby we don't expect teachers to routinely mark books as research shows this is not effective.

Your child should expect more detailed marking on assessments, which take place during a half term. There should then be evidence of the student following up the marking by improving the work as a result of the feedback. This follow-up work by the student can be identified by being in purple pen. All students need to have their own purple pen.

In the meantime, your child will be receiving detailed ongoing feedback in lots of ways that cannot be recorded or seen by you as parents and carers. The questions the teacher asks, plus the observations and ongoing feedback during a lesson, all help your child make progress. We also ask students to self-assess and get feedback from their peers.

The key questions you should be asking are: ***Does my child know their target in each subject? Do they know their current performance? Do they know how to improve their work to get to the next step?*** If they don't know these answers, then feel free to contact your child's teacher via the website.

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In summary - your role as the parent / carer in your child's learning journey:

- Ask to see your child's Organiser every week to check that they are completing their learning log including a record of their reading, their maths and their active Knowledge Organiser work.
- Ensure that your child has access to reading material so that they can complete at least 20 minutes each day. The reading material can be non-fiction.
- Ensure your child has a full equipment kit as detailed in "Information for New Students" and within the Parent/Carer section on the website.
- Help your child to keep their Knowledge Organisers well ordered at home by having a ring binder and dividers for each subject.
- Monitor each day that your child is doing at least an hour of homework (reading/ maths/Knowledge Organiser). Students in Year 11 will be doing more than this, as they do additional revision and practice exam papers.
- Help your child by testing them regularly on current knowledge, plus information from past units. Remember that the more a student revisits knowledge learnt months before, the more it becomes committed to the long term memory.
- Help your child develop their general knowledge and awareness of the world around us by keeping up-to-date with news and current affairs.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT