

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

In a previous letter, we explained the recent changes to our curriculum, as well as our most recent policy around homework. In that same letter, we mentioned mixed-attaining learning, and a few parents and carers have asked for a more detailed explanation of what this means.

We have selected the most pertinent information about the paired approach we use, predominantly in maths, and to a lesser degree in some other subjects. This information is taken from the website of the **Education Endowment Foundation** (EEF) – an independent charity which is funded by the **Department for Education** (DfE) and which is responsible for the educational element of the **'What Works Network'** (WWN). (*You can find out more about the EEF, the DfE and the WWN at [gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network](http://gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network).*)

### **Peer tutoring and collaborative learning**

'Peer tutoring', or 'peer-assisted learning', is an approach linked to what is often called 'collaborative activities' or 'co-operative learning'.

In essence, when adopting this paired approach to learning, children can work in mixed-age pairs, or in mixed-attaining, same-age pairs. In our school, we employ the mixed-attaining, same-age pairs model; in essence, a lower-attaining child (called the 'tutee') is partnered with a higher-attaining child (the 'tutor') and they learn together. Practically, it is the opposite of the 'setting' or 'streaming' approach to learning; according to the EEF, *'it appears that setting or streaming is not an effective way to raise attainment for most pupils'*.

*'Overall, the introduction of peer tutoring approaches appears to have a positive impact on learning, with an average positive effect equivalent to approximately five additional months' progress. Studies have identified benefits for both tutors and tutees, and for a wide range of age groups. Though all types of pupils appear to benefit from peer tutoring, there is some evidence that pupils who are low-attaining and those with special educational needs make the biggest gains'*. Nevertheless, *'the tutor is often thought to improve due to the development of their meta-cognitive awareness and improvement in their capability to self-regulate their own learning.'* Meta-cognitive awareness is a child's ability to explicitly regulate his or her own learning.

*'The impact of collaborative approaches on learning is consistently positive... Approaches which promote talk and interaction between learners tend to result in the best gains.'* Talking partners are an essential tool in teachers' toolkits, and we use these across subjects to encourage high-quality partner talk and meta-cognitive awareness.

*'Peer tutoring appears to be more effective when the approach supplements or enhances normal teaching, rather than replaces it.'* In our school, it forms just over half of the learning in each maths session; the rest of the session is used to apply the paired learning independently.

I hope this explains why we have adopted this approach. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

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