



Liverpool College

## **Growing a Culture of Excellent Learning**

### **Consultation**

The consultation seeks to elicit and develop views and responses from stakeholders: governors, pupils, teachers, support staff and parents on proposed strategies and actions to improve learning at Liverpool College.

### **Learning at Liverpool College**

Pupils at Liverpool College learn well. This is evidenced by results in national examinations. In 2017, at every stage of the College, pupils made better than expected progress, often significantly so.

The College developed a Learner Profile in 2014 to drive and coordinate its efforts in developing the traits of its learners.

This profile was developed and implemented under extreme pressures of time and inspection. Whilst it has contributed to providing a framework for learning improvement in the period after the College's conversion to academy status, it has never received critical scrutiny from all stakeholders.

The impact of teaching on learning is very positive. Inspectors, visitors, consultants, school leaders all believe that teaching over time makes a significant and consistent impact in promoting good learning, leading to outstanding pupil progress and results.

Our pupils are motivated and ambitious. They engage with their learning.

### **If pupils learn well, why are we consulting on changes and plans?**

Whilst assessments reveal that College pupils learn well and in the aggregate make better than expected progress, there are indicators that we need to improve learning if we wish it to become uniformly excellent.

Some pupils make much less progress than others. Outstanding teaching practice exists in the College but it is not yet systematically shared nor does its existence always drive the development of better learning in other parts of the College.

Pupil voice responses indicate that learners are not yet uniformly inspired and focused on their learning. Pupils express appreciation for their teachers and for the learning culture of the College but also express ideas for its improvement and frustration when obstacles to learning are not addressed.

Growing learning culture is the moral purpose of the College. We relentlessly focus on evaluating what is going well for pupils and what could be better. This culture of seeking to improve makes the College a better place to learn, and to work.

Research and best practice show that a focus on learning and learning culture raises expectations, improves attendance, behaviour and raises standards.

### **What we have done so far:**

In October, the teaching and learning group of the School Council in the senior school had been invited to comment on their experience of learning in the College and their views on how their experience might be improved.

On October 16, we invited a former head teacher of an outstanding all-through state school to spend a day visiting lessons, speaking with teachers and pupils and experiencing for herself. In her positive feedback, she made several suggestions about how the College might improve.

On November 8, the teaching staff of the College were invited to reflect on the following statement:

*Learning in our school is outstanding because all pupils relentlessly and successfully deepen and accelerate their learning, inspired, supported and propelled by reflective teaching.*

They gave responses about how the College was positioned in relation to actualizing and valorizing this statement. Their responses were compiled and informed the creation of this consultation document.

In mid-November, we circulated to teaching staff not only the compilation of their views but also invited them to make concrete suggestion for actions the College could take to improve learning. Responses to this invitation are reflected in this consultation document.

### **Next Steps and Timeline:**

The consultation will run from January 3 – March 5 2018 and will include:

- Faculty and School based meetings so that faculties and schools can respond
- Meeting for support staff
- 2 meetings with pupils in Prep, Middle, Upper and Sixth Form to discuss proposals and solicit further ideas and responses
- Assemblies for all parts of the College
- A Parent Information Evening on Thursday 1 February
- A review by the Education and Strategy Committees of the Governing Body, and a presentation at a full governing body meeting.

- A final report and detailed action and implementation plan to all stakeholders on Monday 19 March.
- A report on implementation on Tuesday 3 July, after any pilot programmes have reported.

## The Development of Learning:

### I. Strategy, Communication and Celebration

#### Our Current Situation:

##### Strategy

The College's pupils learn well and the culture of learning is one of high expectations (Ofsted 2015). Our position in performance tables is strong (DfE). In 2016-17, data shows that at every stage of the College pupils make better than expected progress.

Currently learning is developed reactively and tactically. The pace of curriculum changes, the demands of the regulator, the need to ensure "data" is continually reflecting improvement within the accountability measures, and the year- to year financial changes imposed by funding changes and by the demands of a rapidly growing school mean that senior and middle leaders drive changes to fit desired outcomes. A culture of "quick wins" emerges in this context, with schools having to focus on tactical curricular and teaching responses to the changes. This environment militates against the creation of long term strategies for learning.

By way of example, in the last 10 years, the regulator has expressed fondness for the following buzzwords: independent learning, assessment for learning, mastery, questioning, levels/no levels, 5 A\*-C, Progress 8, challenge, flipped learning, learning styles, multiple intelligences, differentiation by outcome, differentiation by task etc etc.

The effect on teachers and schools is to immediately implement changes to teaching and learning which match these predilections. These responses are understandable, and even desirable. However they have the unintended effect of shifting concentration on teaching technique rather than the substance and depth of learning and the experience of the learner. Teaching tactics rather than learning strategy becomes the focus. This is reflected in the inspection cycle and the importance of one year development plans.

This bias toward tactics reduces thinking about learning and in practice imposes techniques and frameworks of teaching which may or may not work for pupils or a particular pupil.

A strategic approach would be:

- ✓ Based on a shared understanding of what learning is and how we learn together.
- ✓ Long term.
- ✓ Focused on learning rather than teaching.
- ✓ Focused on the impact of the teacher on learning over time rather than the appearance of the teacher's impact.
- ✓ Focused on changing the culture of learning not only for pupils but for teachers and support staff.

## Communication

The College communicates with pupils, parents and stakeholders about learning in a fragmented and diffuse way. There is mention of learning in newsletters which also touch on many other matters. Pupils are taught a lot in their subjects but receive no consistent communication or information about learning itself. This means that meta-cognition skills and focus are less than they might be. It also means parents and carers are not as informed about their children's learning as they might be, limiting their ability to support, promote and inspire their learning.

## Celebration

We do celebrate success and efforts in learning regularly. We should however raise the profile and consistency of these celebrations.

## **What We Propose:**

### **A. 5 Year Strategic Plan**

A 5 year strategic plan for the development of a learning culture which focuses entirely on:

- Learning rather than teaching
- Substance and content of learning for all pupils
- Depth and mastery of learning for all pupils
- Impact of teaching on the two points above

This plan would be published and its milestones and outcomes would be published and updated. It would be website based.

**Action by:** VP TLC, HoS, HoF

### **B. Parent Learning Programme**

A newsletter, blog and twitter account with specific advice, guidance and links about learning as well as consistent publication of pupils' best work with an explanation of why the work is good, publication of examples of most improved work with explanation of how the work has been improved, and recognition of a pupil and teacher of the week.

**Action by:** VP TLC

A series of workshops for parents, for example on:

- Parenting and the teenage brain and dealing with teenagers
- Helping young people build resilience
- Building a love of reading in your family
- Supporting pupil learning including metacognition and its value

**Action by:** VP TLC, Learning Support team

### **C. Principal's PPC Achievement Assemblies**

In each school, pupils and staff are recognised for exceptional commitment to PPC. Parents are invited. The example of excellent learning is shared.

**Action by:** Principal, HoS

### **D. Learning Walls in all Corridors**

- Displaying of pupil work and most improved work in glass enclosed displays.
- Pupils comment on their own work.
- Decorations and quotations and messages that inspire and promote learning

**Action by:** HoS, HoF

### **E. Action Research**

Creation of action research teams involving pupils, support staff and teaching staff to evaluate impact of teaching on learning and shared practice, including studying the practice of other schools and settings.

**Action by:** Chairs of Teaching Leadership

## 2. Skills and Development of Learners and Accountability

### Our Current Situation:

#### Learning Expectations

The College sets high standards for its pupils and staff. It pursues consistent and ambitious goals for pupil progress and attainment. Staff manage pupils' behaviour in the classroom according to the behaviour for learning policy of the College. This is focused on addressing areas of pupil behaviour which are not conducive to learning. Staff have reported that they would prefer an immediately enforceable set of learning expectations with clear consequences which is simpler to action and simple to enforce. Pupils are frustrated when the behaviour or attitude to learning of a pupil in their class is addressed too late or doesn't allow them to make sufficiently rapid progress.

#### Pupil Skills

Achievement at the College is high. The vast majority of pupils are highly motivated and self-regulated. They work and learn with ambition and focus.

Pupils, particularly in the senior phase, are able to articulate that the obstacles to their learning are not related to teaching techniques but to their own self-regulation (organisation, motivation, commitment of time, levels of curiosity, resilience) and to their limited meta-cognition skills ie. their ability to think about their learning, to reflect on it, to understand how they learn best, and to acknowledge and identify ways they will learn better.

#### Teacher Skills

Our teaching staff are committed, experienced and skilled. They report a desire to see the school improve the CPD available to them. They identify several areas of their professional practice as being ripe for development. They are unanimous in describing a need for more time and focus to discuss, evaluate and develop the impact of their teaching. They have a desire to grow professionally and both personally and collectively.

The College has always been a mixed ability school and data reveals it does cater effectively for pupils with special learning needs. Teaching staff wish to improve their skills in differentiating learning for **all** pupils. They want to be supported effectively in developing and practising these skills.

#### Support Staff

Our support staff are an important part of advancing learning in the school. Many work individually with pupils and all support staff through their work improve the learning culture of the school.

Support staff have expressed a desire to contribute to the learning culture including improving their own professional development.

### Accountability

Assessment of pupils is recognised as a strength of the College, internally. This view has been confirmed by the accuracy of internal data on pupil progress and by evaluations from sources and experts outside of the College.

The appraisal of teaching staff currently follows a traditional, orthodox and rigorous pattern which has improved teaching over the last few years. It consists of targets and observations, some chosen by the College, some by the teacher. The leadership of the College feel that this system does not always focus on the learner and the impact teaching does or does not have on the learner. This system also stifles risk and innovation and allows for a certain amount of 'coasting' in terms of professional development. Teachers do not object to the appraisal system but do not believe it is currently helping them to improve as practitioners.

### Marking

The College has a clear marking policy. Scrutiny of books and pupil work reveals teachers mark according to this policy, spending substantial amounts of time providing feedback to pupils in this manner. Pupils and staff report that not all of this feedback is actioned, actionable, or particularly productive in driving improvement.

### Learning Environment

The College campus is an inspiring environment to learn in. However, the technology infrastructure and limited number of lockable bulletin boards are identified by pupils and staff as limitations to the development of a deeper learning culture.

## **What We Propose:**

### **A. Learning Expectations**

Learning expectations with sanctions are made clear in every classroom, consistently enforced. We propose developing these together with pupils in each phase of the College and making sure that their consistent implementation are part of the appraisal of teachers and the evaluation and assessment of pupils. Pupils who do not meet these learning expectations will receive interventions and sanctions to ensure that they are able to meet these expectations consistently.

## **B. Curriculum for Meta-Cognition**

Creation of a curriculum for meta-cognition to be delivered age appropriately in LC/Form time twice weekly.

Research reveals the development of meta-cognition skills is the most effective and most cost effective strategy a school can pursue in improving learning in pupils (research from Guy Claxton, Bill Lucas, Carol Dweck, John Hattie).

This detailed curriculum will lead pupils through age-appropriate questioning about their skills as learners. On this basis pupils will develop a written profile/portfolio of successes, targets, strategies. Parents and form teachers/house mentors will, in certain phases of the College participate in this process. Twice annually this profile will be digitized and will form part of the pupil's report and feedback.

## **C. Thematic and Structured CPD Programme**

### **(i) LC Learning Lab**

These Wednesday afternoon sessions which can involve pupils from time to time are focused on specific topics/themes and specific age groups; giving teachers and TAs and occasionally invited pupils an opportunity to skill up in a particular area. Examples of topics that could be covered in the Learning Lab are:

- Pre Prep - How to use deeper questioning to deepen learning
- Prep - How to use modelling and scaffolding to achieve deeper learning
- Middle - How to plan better lessons using personalised learning plans
- Upper - How to use effective immediate feedback to deepen learning
- Sixth - How to use check back for 6<sup>th</sup> Formers
- Whole - How to use data effectively to inform planning

The Learning Lab sessions are about 45 minutes long, are practical in orientation, and delivered by external and internal speakers. Three times annually they are focused on safeguarding training.

There are twice termly meetings between selected pupils and teachers in the senior phase in Learning Lab, again focused on the topics and themes chosen by HoF and HoS.

LC Learning Lab will also be the name of the communication platform described in section I.

**Action by:** VP TLC, HoS

### **(ii) Extended INSET**

We intend to theme these four INSETs (2 full days, two twilights) around one theme. For example the theme for 2018-19 will be "Learning to Learn".

**Action by:** VP TLC

### **(iii) Support Staff Learning Lab**

Intermittently, support staff will attend training and development sessions relevant to their tasks at the College.

**Action by:** DoF&O

### **D. Learning Impact Time**

These are weekly meetings held by either faculty or in the case of Pre Prep and Prep, by school.

LITs will focus systematically and accountably on targets and objectives in:

- ✓ Sharing best practice
- ✓ Strategies for individual pupils
- ✓ Standardisation and assessment
- ✓ Review and development of curricula and schemes of work
- ✓ Coordination of resources and materials
- ✓ Updates and information on curricular and policy
- ✓ Review of internal and external data of progress and achievement of pupils
- ✓ Development Plans
- ✓ Improving the physical learning environment

**Action by:** VP TLC, HoS, HoF

### **E. Developing Teaching**

We propose to develop **Talk for Teaching** as a model for professional development for the improvement of teaching.

The premise for the “Talk for Teaching” model (Paul Garvey, 2017) is that the best place for professional development to happen is where the learning takes place: the classroom. Aligned with the focus on the impact of learning over time, the process of live coaching recognises that there is no best way overall to teach, that every teacher will have his/her own style and differing strengths and that every teacher wants to be the best that they can be. The process involves groups of at least 2 members of staff visiting colleagues’ everyday lessons, staying for c10 – 20 minutes. During this time no notes are taken: the observers discuss and reflect amongst themselves whilst the teacher gets on with his/her day job, joining in the discussion when possible. There may be no school directed focus for the observation, just the sharing of good ideas and practice: teachers are intelligent professionals capable of quickly realising what will or won’t work for them. Nor is there scheduled feedback afterwards, saving on the valuable resource of time. By harnessing the collective

intelligence of staff at LC and developing a strong trust culture over time, professional dialogue is enhanced and CPD put into the hands of staff: they are the learners, modelling collaborative learning across the College. Because we know from our current appraisal system that our teachers are all good or outstanding, we further believe that this model would lead to better learning.

Every teacher in the College will receive training in order to participate in this model of professional development.

**Action by:** VP TLC

## **F. Pupil Learning Forum**

This group of pupils volunteers meets with VP TLC to discuss ways learning can be improved and ensure representation at LC Learning Lab meetings. The group will be representative of all pupils and all academic abilities across the College.

**Action by:** VP TLC

## **G. Marking**

As part of a strategy of pupils increasing their meta-cognition and their self-regulation, the marking policy of the College will need to change. We propose developing the use of the traditionally termed DIRT time into a systematic system which makes the learner accept responsibility for their work, and gives clear guidance, through reflection and meta-cognition, to ways which would improve the work of the learner. Assessments will continue to be marked by a “raw” grade or mark, but pupil feedback will focus on a cycle of reflection and improvement based on pupils’ own understanding of what went well and what must improve. Research shows this is a highly effective and efficient way of providing feedback to pupils.

## **H: Coordination of Learning Environment Improvements**

All PTA requests should be focused on delivering the resources to improve the learning environment by means of technology upgrades in classrooms and more IT equipment and more learning and pupil voice walls throughout the College.

**Action by:** Principal, VP MRAP

Coordinate and organise volunteer efforts to beautify and enhance the physical environment.

**Action by:** DoF&O, VP MRAP

### 3. Leadership, Structures & Time

#### **Our Current Situation:**

##### Time

Staff and pupils believe they need time to improve the learning culture. Time is a precious resource in schools. Pupils and teaching staff would like time to reflect. Teaching staff particularly have asked for time to gather, discuss, plan and implement.

Currently the Wednesday afternoon “meeting” slot for teaching staff is inadequate in frequency and time because of the need to include: safeguarding training, parents’ evenings, heads of faculty meetings, academic councils and various other “admin” meetings into one 45 minute slot per week.

##### Senior Leaders as Leaders of Learning

The role of senior leaders without an explicit teaching focus in promoting and participating in deepening a learning culture is not always clear or developed. In Pre Prep and Prep there is a long tradition of senior leaders taking responsibility for learning in their part of the College. Our Heads of Faculty and subject coordinators were recently recognised by external experts and observers as a strength of the school. We are therefore well placed to review the roles of some senior leaders, including the Principal, in promoting deeper and excellent learning whilst empowering subject coordinators and heads of faculty to innovate and drive change.

##### Pupil Voice

Pupil voice at Liverpool College is systematically harvested. It is not however systematically evaluated and then actioned. The learner, particularly a learner who is able to reflect on learning, should be guiding and inspiring changes in learning culture. Currently this process is intermittent.

#### **What We Propose:**

##### **A. Accessibility of LIT for Teaching Staff**

Pre Prep LIT:	Thursdays from 3.30-4.20pm
Prep LIT:	Fridays from 12.15-1pm
Senior phase faculties LIT:	Fridays from 1.40-2.10pm

In order for Learning Impact Time (LIT) to be accessible to all teaching staff in the Prep School on a Friday, we will form a new duty rota employing senior leaders, available and suitable support staff, who will supervise all of lunch in Prep School.

To enable teaching staff in the Senior School to meet between 1.40-2.10pm, assembly will take place on a Friday and a new supervision rota for assemblies introduced.

**Action by:** Principal, VP TLC, VP MRAP, HoS, HoF, DoF&O

## **B. Academic Middle Leaders**

In the primary and secondary phase, academic middle leaders such as Heads of Faculty and subject coordinators will meet together weekly or fortnightly on Monday lunchtimes with a catered lunch.

**Action by:** VP TLC

## **C. Responsibilities of Senior Leaders**

We will change and make explicit the responsibilities of senior leaders in relation to learning and in the context of the proposals contained within this document.

**Action by:** Principal, VP TLC

## **D. Teaching Support Staff**

All TAs and teaching support staff will participate fully in LC Learning Lab Activities.

**Action by:** VP TLC

## **E. Breakfast Learning Labs**

On Tuesday mornings we will hold a Learning Lab breakfast for pupil delegates and interested staff to discuss learning initiatives from 7.45-8.15am in the Principal's Study.

**Action by:** Principal, VP TLC

## **F. Learner Survey**

We will develop, together with pupils, a phase-appropriate Learner Survey which each teacher will ask each class to complete termly.

**Action by:** VP TLC, HoF/SC