St. George's Teaching Touchstones

A co-created, evidence-informed, shared language around best practice for teaching and learning

Rationale:

As a teaching community at St. George's, we have co-created an evidence-informed, shared language around best practice for teaching and learning: our teaching touchstones.

Our teaching touchstones have been written using a Hub model. They are context-free, and retain a consistent reference point to base discussions for developing teaching and learning. Subject leads and teachers can use the touchstones to guide domain-specific decisions around implementation, systems and processes and identify best bets across subject areas and Key Stages.

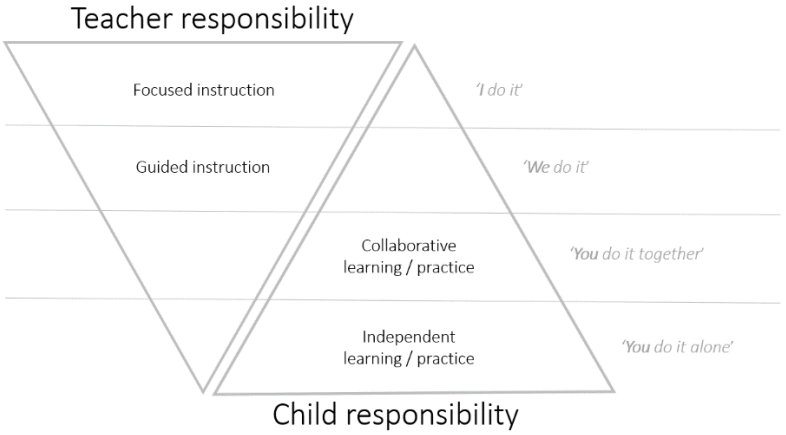
Our teaching touchstones are grouped under ten principles of effective instruction, which are further categorised into three domains: the behaviour domain; the curriculum domain; and the teaching domain.

The principles of effective instruction are heavily influenced by Rosenshine's work. Our teaching touchstones also work in symbiosis with the Gradual Release Towards Independence model. Eventual independence can be viewed as an aim within a session, over a sequence of lessons, or across a period of time or Key Stage.

When used during learning walks or lesson observations, our teaching touchstones are starting points to describe observed best practice and pupil performance. They are also used to formulate strategic questions to scaffold shared discussions towards agreed targets, next steps or areas for support. They should not be used as a checklist. An observer should not expect to see every teaching touchstone in every session. The teaching touchstones are examples of best practice that takes place over time.

St. George's Principles of Effective Instruction

The Gradual Release Towards Independence Model



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Behaviour Domain	
1. High expectations and behaviour for learning:	
1.1	Challenge is consistently high (see Challenge section).
1.2	Pace of session maintains pupil motivation and engagement and is responsive to pupil need.
1.3	Up to half of session is dedicated to modelling, questioning and feeding back to pupils before practice begins, with pupils' attention maintained throughout.
1.4	Pupils are appropriately greeted and have access to resources / prompts / scaffolds / books as soon as they enter classroom.
1.5	'Time on task' is maximised – pupils are actively engaged in learning at all stages of the session and learning time is not lost to disengagement, opting out, social or other non-educational activities.
1.6	High expectations of pupils' oracy and spoken language are exemplified through modelling back / scaffolding pupil responses / asking pupils to correct when feedback has been given, if language is not used correctly.
1.7	Interactions with pupils demand 100% participation at all points of the session – there are no opt outs
1.8	Teacher is assertive – register/tone of voice is used well for different purposes / messages; eye contact is given to pupils.
1.9	Pupils respond appropriately and swiftly to transitions within sessions – core routines are touch points for lessons that all students recognise and know how to behave appropriately – eg. embellished countdowns to prepare pupils for silence.
1.10	Silence during key phases of session is demanded – including during modelling and independent practice (where appropriate); strategies such as signal – pause – insist are utilised and the teacher never talks over pupils.
1.11	Pupils know appropriate behaviour responses and how to communicate at key parts of session – when to put hands up / when to talk aloud / how to speak to partners / adults.
1.12	Positive body language is demanded from all pupils at all stages of session (sitting up straight, all pupils participating when asked to, no swinging on chairs or slouching).
1.13	Paired or group work is well structured with clearly defined roles – there should be no 'free riders'.
1.14	Positive behaviour for learning is narrated by the class teacher in the moment so expectations are reinforced; first attention is given to best conduct.
1.15	Rewards / praise given throughout session to motivate and reinforce high expectations.
1.16	Use of positive 'St. George's language' (age appropriate) reinforces expectations at all stages of session - 'growth mindset'; 'correct choices'; 'thank you'.
1.17	Positive praise for demonstrating Learner Qualities is consistently used. More praise is given for displaying these than praise for 'correct answers' so metacognitive strategies are developed and independence promoted.
1.18	Positive interactions are based around real learning - 'it is through their own work that self-esteem will grow'.
1.19	All pupils, including those who have received private sanctions, are purposefully caught demonstrating positive behaviours.
1.20	There is a focus on celebrating behaviour that is 'over and above' so pupils strive to reach the highest of expectations over time.
1.21	Negative emotions are avoided in interactions with pupils; wrong choices from pupils are responded to with deliberate calm.
1.22	Potential disruptions to learning are anticipated and often stopped before they begin through clearly defined teacher gesturing or signalling.
1.23	Corrections are framed as positive reinforcements 'Sean, Mo… I'd like you both looking this way and listening… thanks'.
1.24	Learning environment is in line with expectations; it is set up for pupils to feel pride; exemplify expectations; prompt learning; balance cognitive load and aid attention to desired cues.
1.25	St George's behaviour blueprint is adhered to by teachers and pupils.
Curriculum Domain	
2. Challenge	
2.1	Top-down teaching takes place: one lesson purpose for all – appropriately scaffolded. High expectations are set for ALL pupils. ALL children are encouraged to aspire to the same standard of excellence.
2.2	Lesson purposes, focuses or objectives are taken from St. George's planning documents, progression models, knowledge organisers or knowledge strips.
2.3	Around 80% of the session is based on prior learning to enable the correct balance of successful practice, consolidation and challenge.
2.4	Thinking is required for all and that thinking is centred on the purpose of the lesson and not on extraneous load – 'memory is the residue of thought'.
2.5	Cognitive load is balanced – tasks are not over sugar-coated / too experiential for novice learners.
2.6	High quality procedural tasks set – learning/knowledge is applied to other contexts.
2.7	Tasks can be collaborative but thinking is required for all pupils – focussed on the learning, not extraneous load.
2.8	Next steps/learning/extensions are clear, understood and available to all pupils.
2.9	Pupils are challenged to give the best answer they can and produce the best outcome they are capable of – eg. more precise language. Don't accept 'good enough' because of time pressures.
2.10	Some elements of choice given to children when appropriate to motivate and engage (although this is carefully balanced with learners' level of expertise / prior knowledge).
3. Sequencing	
3.1	The session purpose, objective and tasks clearly build upon prior learning in the topic or subject within that year group and across key stages.
3.2	The session is sequenced and broken down well so that new learning builds upon prior learning.

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3.3	Big ideas of subject / topic / learning are signposted to help pupils place new learning within existing schema (zooming in and zooming out – using flowcharts, knowledge organisers, knowledge strips, classroom display).
3.4	Pupils are taken on a 'Learning journey', which is clearly signposted: learning objectives, rationale for learning, overview of key ideas and stages of progress are signalled.
3.5	Session is broken down into small steps so that working memory is not overburdened.
3.6	Summary reviews are given at key points of the session to link back to the main concept / learning / big ideas to continually promote making links to prior schema.
3.7	During session, links are constantly being made between prior and current learning – often elicited from pupils themselves.
3.8	New knowledge / vocabulary / learning is clearly defined so that feedback can be precise and relevant to defined learning.
3.9	Sequencing is responsive to pupils needs uncovered when assessing for learning.
	4. Reviewing
4.1	Sessions begin with review of previous learning/knowledge/vocabulary taken from knowledge organisers / KAOs.
4.2	Low stakes quizzes used – taking different format/style/order of questioning in order to interleave knowledge.
4.3	Spacing of knowledge recall through weekly/monthly/half termly cumulative reviews takes place.
4.4	Review often links directly to the new learning in the session so pupils have brought prior learning to the front of their mind so that it is easily accessible to working memory (they are 'primed').
4.5	Retrieval practice activities encourage making links between vocabulary / knowledge / concepts across topics and year groups.
4.6	Retrieval practice is generative – this means removing prompts, scaffolds etc and making children think for themselves.
4.7	Teachers use retrieval practise as an assessment for learning opportunity and re-teach if necessary at the point of teaching.
4.8	Teacher's use a variety of tasks/activities to allow pupils to explore their schemata in different ways, strengthening future recall. E.g. Teacher-led, written/verbal quizzes, self-quizzing, self-explanation, multiple choice/open response tests, rehearsing explanations, summarising, creating schema maps, demonstration, performance of learned techniques.
4.9	Reviewing learning happens within the session as well as across sessions to enable assessment for learning.
4.10	Pupil book talk and paired review is used to enable pupils to summarise and sequence key prior learning using past generative tasks (ie. pupil exercise books are used as a retrieval cue).
4.11	Time is given to pupils to review, read and embed knowledge from knowledge organisers and knowledge strips.
4.12	Summarising at the end of generative tasks verbally or in writing is highly valued as it can aid retention up to 30%.
4.13	Reviewing task is often two-layered to enable thinking and integration of new ideas into pre-existing schema (ie. 'How are the Greeks similar to the Romans?' instead of 'Was the Greek civilisation a democracy or a dictatorship?').
4.14	Curriculum resources from CUSP are made use of for reviewing – including 'name two things' and cumulative quizzes.
	5. Vocabulary
5.1	Core Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary taken from St. George's curriculum planning or knowledge organisers is 'frontloaded' - signposted before being encountered – so that the pupils can encounter the word at least one more time than they would if this was not explicitly planned for.
5.2	Words' etymology and associated prefixes and suffixes are signposted in order for pupils to make associations with language over time and for new learning to be more 'sticky'.
5.3	Vocabulary is clearly displayed using St. George's learning environment expectations.
5.4	Too many words are not introduced at once to avoid overload.
5.5	When clarifying vocabulary within a text, it is done parenthetically (quick and concise) to ensure the focus remains on the text.
5.6	'Just tell them' - misconceptions are avoided by explaining the definition and not asking if others know when encountering new vocabulary.
5.7	When coming across pronunciation, a 'just tell' approach is used to avoid misconceptions.
5.8	New words are taught with a robust method: words are defined within the context of the learning or text being used, using friendly explanations (dictionary explanations are often too succinct and use academic definitions which rely on knowledge of other academic language), then provide an additional context and actively process.
5.9	New vocabulary is celebrated and highly valued in class and there are opportunities carved to use and encounter this new vocabulary wherever possible (across sessions and subjects).
5.10	To improve Tier 1 words, the teacher is more loquacious to promote good speaking and listening (What does a tidy room mean? What does a clear desk look like?).
5.11	Analysis of word choice is embedded within sessions – pupils are asked how selecting a certain word impacts differently, rather than alternative synonyms to give a more precise image or feeling.
5.12	Pupils are given opportunities to say the word, use it in a sentence, and have generative tasks built around it so pupils acquire the meaning and can use it within their learning.
5.13	Vocabulary specific tasks such as: the Frayer model; use of actions; saying in a sentence; CUSP word paths/association and explaining links; are used to embed vocabulary into used vocabulary of pupils.
5.14	The teacher models using tier 2 and 3 vocabulary consistently and precisely across sessions and expects pupils to do the same.
	Teaching Domain
	6. Presenting and explanation
6.1	Makes use of direct instruction – 'Just tell them' when introducing new concepts – experiential learning to take place *after* new learning is introduced.
6.2	Core knowledge / vocabulary is often introduced using dual coding strategies (icon alongside key word or phrase; clean, distraction-free backgrounds). When this happens, the teacher provides the extra context / hinterland knowledge whilst talking around the information.

6.3	Core knowledge / vocabulary is often introduced whilst reading a high-quality text. When this happens, the teacher clearly signposts the core knowledge to be extracted from within the already given context/hinterland-rich text and scaffolds pupils to do the same.
6.4	High quality talk / oracy is modelled at all points eg. use of disciplinary vocabulary accurately – pronunciation of words – use of formal / informal language.
6.5	The teacher clearly signals transitions between different parts of the session.
6.6	Use of tone of voice, actions and volume emphasises points and promotes engagement and understanding.
6.7	Story/narrative/analogy is used skilfully to make learning more memorable.
6.8	Video, unless broken down and used alongside stills from it, is avoided when asking pupils to learn new information as it is transient in nature.
6.9	Dual coded diagrams, flowcharts and schema maps are used to introduce knowledge and explicitly link to prior learning.
6.10	The teacher displays high levels of subject knowledge, being able to describe new learning in different ways and add extra information to the context.
6.11	Substantive knowledge is taught through making explicit the disciplinary process subject specialists went through to acquire new knowledge (ie. using images of the Bayeux Tapestry to explain how historians acquired knowledge about the Norman conquest).
6.12	The learning environment is used to free up working memory and act as a retrieval cue or space to present new learning.
6.13	Presentation is responsive to pupils needs uncovered when assessing for learning.
	7. Modelling
7.1	All tasks are modelled before pupils are asked to complete independently to ensure clarity.
7.2	The teacher clearly narrates modelled steps, indicating key features or points in the learning to further embed metacognitive strategies.
7.3	High-quality 'ready-made' examples are provided for children to draw features and ideas from, pitched at or above national expectations.
7.4	The teacher physically models tasks 'live' to ensure children understand how to complete tasks.
7.5	The teacher uses a range of conceptual models, ensuring concrete, pictorial and abstract are represented appropriately.
7.6	As novices, children are taught knowledge first, in order to have developed schemas through which to begin to use procedurally.
7.7	High quality worked examples should be available alongside addressing and pre-empting misconceptions by the teacher.
7.8	Information and modelling is broken up into a sequence of connected or arranged patterns.
7.9	Mistakes are modelled to avoid future misconceptions and be positive about changing and editing work.
7.10	Modelling should be varied in how to complete the task to support the range of learners in the class.
7.11	New learning / procedures / tasks should be modelled in small, well-defined chunked steps to avoid cognitive overload.
7.12	Modelling is completed in a silent and observed manner by the class to ensure understanding is clear.
7.13	Pre-prepared examples and non-examples are prepared and shared, pitched at or above national expectation.
7.14	When completing modelling, the gradual release towards independence model is used (I-WE-YOU). This process may be repeated at different stages of the session if tasks have been broken down.
7.15	The learning journey should be signposted through zooming in and out to sequence their understanding.
7.16	Modelling takes place at all stages of the session (ie. not a small amount of modelling followed by long, extended periods of time with no feedback or modelled guidance).
7.17	The learning environment and curriculum resources are used appropriately when modelling – a visualiser for live modelling, a teacher's exercise book, flipchart paper, working walls, vocabulary strips, knowledge organisers and knowledge strips are referenced and modelled how to use.
7.18	Modelling is responsive to pupils needs uncovered when assessing for learning.
	8. Questioning
8.1	All pupils are involved with no opt out – cold calling is the default method of questioning, rather than hands up.
8.2	Questions are asked at all stages of session – spread across as many pupils as possible.
8.3	Declarative questions asked to recall, review and apply (predominantly closed responses).
8.4	Procedural questions asked to apply, analyse, evaluate and create (predominantly more open ended questions).
8.5	Targeted/pre-prepared questions asked to specific to pupils and/or objectives.
8.6	Mixture of response required – cold call / all respond (thumbs up / whisper / whiteboards etc.) / random responders / bounce or share question.
8.7	'Serve – return – raise the challenge' format used to up-level responses.
8.8	A/B/C questioning techniques (pupils asked to Agree/Build upon/Challenge other pupils' responses) used to up-level responses.
8.9	Questions are 'anchored' – enough time given / repeated to ensure pupils have time to think.
8.10	Talk partners are used to give students opportunities to rehearse answers.
8.11	Children are re-asked questions if they made an error or were not able to respond, giving them a chance to answer.
8.12	Understanding is shown through explanation, not just saying they have understood ('Can you tell me what you have understood?' rather than 'Does everyone understand?')
8.13	Deliberately chosen 'connect' questions asked of pupils to promote generating links in schema, when asking pupils for deeper learning (ie. I am thinking of 'kingdom' and I think it links to the word 'sacrifice', can you tell me how?)
8.14	Multiple choice answers have as many plausible answers as possible so that misconceptions can be identified and deeper conversations had with pupils.
8.15	Incomplete answers are scaffolded to completeness through teacher modelling or use of other class members.

8.16	Elaborative questions are modelled to the children throughout learning (teacher feigning not knowing – 'I have been wondering why….)
8.17	Elaborative questions (asking 'how' and 'why' questions about learning) generated by pupils once appropriate amount of prior learning has taken place.
8.18	Sentence stems are used to scaffold responses for pupils for more probing questions.
8.19	Questioning is responsive to pupils needs uncovered when assessing for learning.
	9. Generative practice and tasks
9.1	Tasks require pupils to think hard about the new learning – working memory is not overburdened by tasks which are not about the learning (ie. summarising lessons historians have learned from multiple sources about the Battle of Britain rather than creating papier mache spitfires) – memory is the residue of thought.
9.2	Tasks are aligned with those modelled by the teacher.
9.3	Learning tasks are designed for pupils to go through the S.O.I. model – to actively select, organise and integrate new knowledge.
9.4	Scaffolds are given to help pupils organise or connect their learning or to provide knowledge that would otherwise overload working memory (ie. sentence starters, flow chart or diagram scaffolds like venn diagrams, knowledge notes, picture prompts for writing).
9.5	Guided practice is used ('we' section from gradual release model) and interwoven with questioning, modelling and live feedback.
9.6	Opportunities are provided for collaborative practice – primarily in mixed prior attainment pairs, predefined by teacher, with clear roles defined.
9.7	Opportunities are provided for independent practice to aid 'overlearning' for later automatic recall.
9.8	Teacher regularly circulates the room and checks for understanding across all groups during stages of practice.
9.9	Tasks are often designed for deliberate practice of discrete skills, building up to applying at a later time with fluency.
9.10	There is often more than one task within a session as new learning / information is learned and applied. Tasks are broken down with skilful modelling and feedback.
9.11	Pupils are asked to summarise learning through planned systems and processes, ie. paired pupil book talk; written summaries after explanations or following organising tasks; 'name 2 things' tasks. This is modelled by the teacher.
9.12	Pupils have regular opportunities to map their schema through generative journey books and schema maps in exercise books.
9.13	There are opportunities for pupils to use organisational drawings (mapping, venn diagrams, tables) and/or explanative drawings (cause and effect hexagons, diamond nines, line graphs). Decorative drawings are avoided as they are less generative.
9.14	Word paths are used to embed vocabulary, make deliberate links and connections, and to ensure pupils are using tier 3 vocabulary correctly.
9.15	Opportunities are given over time for pupils to self-test, using their exercise books, knowledge organisers and knowledge strips to self-check and correct.
9.16	Pupils have time to 'teach' others or to self-explain so that they are encouraged to actively go through the SOI model themselves.
9.17	Opportunities are given for pupils to enact learning using concrete objects and to make links using analogies to new learning.
9.18	Pupils have a high success rate during independent tasks – around 80% is the optimal level of challenge and consolidation, although this moves more towards 100% nearer the end of a unit for knowledge or skills which need to be fluent and readily retrieved from long term memory.
9.19	Pupils are exposed to declarative generative tasks – often more linked to substantive knowledge ie. note taking, completing / labelling diagrams, schema mapping, summarizing.
9.20	Pupils are exposed to more procedural generative tasks as they are deeper into a topic. They are asked to apply their learning and critically analyze / make connections across subjects and broader concepts (ie. What is similar about the Romans and the Saxons? How were they different? Were the Romans good for Britain beyond their invasion? Who is the most important monarch – Elizabeth I or Henry VIII? What is the worst outcome of deforestation in the rainforest and why?)
9.21	Opportunities for 'and, but, because' sentences from a shared sentence opener are used to develop links within schema. (ie. The Vikings invaded Britain and…. The Vikings invaded Britain but… The Vikings invaded Britain because…)
	10. Feedback
10.1	There is careful groundwork before the feedback is given. Teachers provide high quality direct instruction which the feedback then relates to.
10.2	Feedback relates to the LO/SC set and formative assessment of learning gaps has taken place so feedback can address this.
10.3	Success criteria are co-constructed so children understand how to achieve them. This can be done by sharing anonymised pupil work & discussing the strengths and weaknesses, sharing excellent examples of work & using non-examples.
10.4	All-student response systems are used to assess where to go next and what feedback is offered. This could include: checks on mini-whiteboards, true/false, thumbs up/down, hinge point multiple choice questions (where each answer demonstrates an error in understanding).
10.5	Tasks are designed with feedback in mind. Teachers question whether the task will reveal what a pupil is thinking and whether feedback can be given?
10.6	Feedback is usually immediate/live rather than delayed. However, teachers should use judgement to decide feedback timing based on the task, the pupil and the class.
10.7	When pupils are completing tasks, staff circulate the room to provide live feedback and address misconceptions at the point of learning.
10.8	Feedback focuses on moving the learning forward.
10.9	Feedback is specific, not just general praise such as "well done", so children know what they have done well or what they need to improve. Feedback should not be related to personal characteristics, see content in 10.10
10.10	Feedback specific to the task is given – ie. feedback focused on improving a specific piece of work or specific type of task.

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10.11	Feedback specific to the subject is given – ie. feedback targeting the underlying processes in a task which are used across a subject. The feedback can, therefore, be applied in other subject tasks.
10.12	Feedback specific to self-regulation is given – ie. feedback is focussed on the learner's own self-regulation. It is usually provided as prompts and cues – and aims to improve the learner's own ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. Explicit reference is given to St. George's Learner Qualities.
10.13	Children are given adequate time and systems to respond to feedback.
10.14	A growth mindset culture is established where pupils are motivated by feedback, are confident they can achieve it, see feedback as a positive and trust their teacher.
10.15	Teachers consider working memory when giving feedback ensuring that it does not overload it. Feedback is adapted for certain pupils.
10.16	Teachers model the use of feedback using the visualiser. Successful uses of feedback are shared and celebrated.
10.17	Feedback is clear and appropriate language used so children understand it. When written, handwriting is readable.
10.18	Time is given for post-feedback activities so it is used. For example, detective activities where a teacher puts a dot in the margin where there are errors and asks the pupil to find and correct them, class discussion of feedback where it is clarified, children correcting errors and editing work using a checklist, completing a similar task with feedback in mind, redrafting work.
10.19	Immediate/live feedback is generally verbal, only writing in comments when required. Children respond to this immediately. Achievements related to Success Criteria or key learning are highlighted in green during the lesson (See specific subject exercise book expectations).
10.20	Whole class feedback is deployed with the aid of the visualiser – examples of work are shared and collectively discussed. Time is given for children to respond to this whole class feedback.
10.21	Verbal feedback stamps/codes are not used – they do not improve pupil outcomes.
10.22	Self-assessment is encouraged and modelled by the teacher, marking written responses together under the visualiser is promoted.
10.23	Pupils and teachers use green highlighters to indicate key learning has been showcased or criteria has been met in exercise books.
10.24	Pupils use green pens to edit learning in response to feedback in exercise books.
10.25	Feedback is broken up and given at all stages of the session ie. during retrieval tasks, when receiving an answer to verbal questions, during pupils' generative tasks – not just at the end of sessions.