

Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES
SCHOOL



February 2025



Spring is Upon Us!

The mornings are becoming brighter, the weather is somewhat warmer and the breeze is slightly lifting!

No, this isn't trickery, Spring is definitely upon us and the looming exam season inches closer as the days pass.

Although it may seem like the months of May and June are still in the distance, it's actually only 10 school weeks until Y11 complete their first examination.

The pressure needs to be on and the pace needs to be upheld, it's easy to allow students to become lost in the chaos of mock examinations and results, however, we need to be ensuring that students are making progress in every lesson.

It's vitally important that every minute in the classroom is spent wisely, developing and enhancing a students' learning.

As some of you may know, many students and staff are due to start fasting next week. I wanted to take this opportunity to write a little more on Ramadhan, what it means to pupils and how to support pupils during this time.

What I would really like to outline, however, is that pupils are old enough and mature enough to understand why they are fasting and this shouldn't impact on their behaviour in lessons.

I hope you find the article intriguing and if you have any follow up questions, to please ask!

In this newsletter you can expect:

Article on Supporting Fasting Pupils.

Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!

National College Recommendations

CPD Book Recommendations

X / Twitter Shoutouts

Updates on the Teaching and Learning Development programme

ECT Corner



Ramadan and Supporting the Pupils that Fast

Oh, you who believe! Fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous. Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) – Holy Qur'an 2:183

For Muslims around the globe, one of the most important months of the year is soon to begin. Ramadhan is a time that many look forward to and I wanted to have the focus of this month's newsletter on how we can support the vast range of pupils that will be fasting during the school day this year.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, the month of revelation of the Holy Qur'an, is an obligation for all Muslims past the age of puberty. There are exemptions from these requirements for some people, such as the sick, those engaging in a long journey, menstruating women, or those who are frail in old age. Exemptions have to be made up later or compensated for, e.g. by fasting on another day or by feeding the poor. Fasting at other times is also encouraged but is non-obligatory.



Fasting is undertaken by Muslims for the sake of Allah, the Creator, the Merciful, the Loving (to mention just three of His names or attributes) and is one of the main requirements of the Islamic faith. Muslims believe this cultivates virtues such as piety, love of God, unity, vigilance, devotion, patience, unselfishness, moderation, thriftiness, satisfaction with what one has, discipline, social belonging, self-control, and empathy and compassion for fellow human beings who might suffer hunger and deprivation unwillingly.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the main requirements of the Islamic faith. The daily fast begins at the time of the Fajr (dawn) prayer and finishes at the time of Maghrib (sunset) prayer and students are expected to abstain from food and drink for this duration of time.

Each year, the calendared month of Ramadan moves back by ten days and so it's fairly reminiscent to some staff members of the days when the fasts used to begin at 1am and close at 10pm at night! Thankfully, the timings have returned to relatively normal as now the fasting period will begin between 4am-5am and end between 6 -7pm which will be a welcome to many of our students!

The routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. Depending on the time of year, the whole household may be awake much earlier in the morning and will stay up later at night. Young children may well be more tired or excitable during school time even if they are not fasting themselves. Those students who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day, due to the long hours they may find themselves awake during the evening.

During Ramadan, students will not only be abstaining from food and drink in the day, but will also be engaging in prayers in the night. After opening their fast, many pupils will make their way to the local mosques to engage in prayer and worship. It's important to remember that this will be the case for many of our pupils and engaging in discussion with them about this might be a way to broaden relationships with pupils.





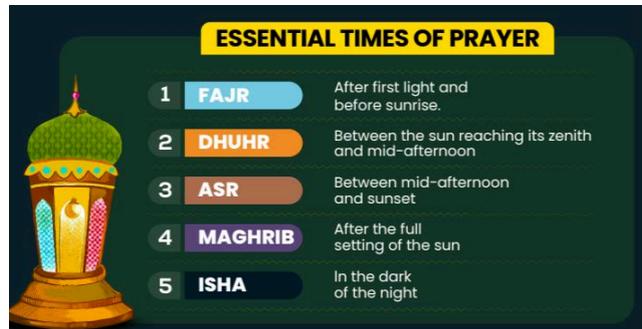
Ramadan is a time of unity and reflection. At home, I often find the house is much quieter, with family members taking the time to reflect on their relationship with God and find more time to be thankful for the life that we are given. Ramadan is a time of charity and to reflect on all we have whilst doing what we can for those who do not have the same privileges. The act of fasting is not only done to spend more time in supplication with God, but to think about the way we treat others and how we can alleviate the suffering of people all over the world, regardless of faith, race or ethnicity.

During the Family Iftar this year, there will be a fundraising appeal for Benefit Mankind who have partnered with Deaf Blind UK. The donations will help to fund: Deafblind UK's Winter Wellness Campaign, Deafblind UK's Employability Programme, Education Initiatives, Technology support and Wellbeing and emotional assistance



Benefit Mankind and Deafblind UK are committed to creating lasting change for those living with sensory impairments. This partnership will focus on enhancing the quality of life for individuals by providing critical resources, education, and emotional support. By working together, we aim to break down barriers and create opportunities for greater independence and inclusion within society."

It is wonderful to see how engaged our students are with charitable acts and this will be an opportunity for them to use their own privilege to benefit the community around them.



How can we support those who fast?

Despite what the students may tell you, they are all capable of writing that extra paragraph or answering the next question!

It's important to acknowledge those that fast, whilst also creating an environment where expectations are still maintained. Especially with Y11, pupils are old enough and mature enough to understand the importance of Ramadan, whilst ensuring the importance of examinations is still held high. Pupils should not use the excuse of fasting or Ramadan for silly behaviour, this is in direct contradiction of what Islam teaches and it should not be used as a 'Get out of Jail Free Card'.

Meaningful adjustments can be made, for example, in PE, the curriculum is designed so that during Ramadhan, pupils are taking part in an orienteering activity, which allows them to still develop their skills, whilst also maintaining their fast. This will be a welcome adjustment for students and is a great example of the work we do at Sharples to create a diverse, inclusive learning environment.

Finally, I would like to point out the Family Iftar that has been running for a number of years now. As someone who went to a school with a lack of any sort of multicultural background, I find it really encouraging and lovely as to how we create such a vibrant atmosphere around fasting and Ramadan. I can assure you that it doesn't go unnoticed by students, they appreciate the endeavours staff go to and I know they enjoy seeing everyone at the Family Iftar. It is a lovely event that gets better with each year, I would encourage you to come along and bring your family to see the evening and how brilliant it is.

This year it will be taking place on the 7th March with a 4.45pm arrival time.

It will include a traditional recitation by a former pupil, Nizam Babariya. He will be giving a speech with the focus on the "The Miraculous Quran: A Timeless Guidance and Its Connection in Ramadhan". Many of our students know Nizam from the community and will be excited to hear his recitation and insightful words. Along with this, there will be a selection of traditional food such as biryani, starters and desserts.

Overall, although this month's newsletter is slightly different, I hope it has given you an insight into what many of our students will be experiencing over the next month. One Y11 pupil suddenly realised that he wouldn't be able to "Eat five times a day!" from next week! Please ask questions, develop relationships and come along to the Family Iftar to experience what Ramadhan is all about!

The pictures are from last year's event!



SHARPLES CELEBRATES!



Each month we want to shout out teachers who want to share excellent practice! The first 3 teachers to email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk with an example of brilliant practice will receive a box of celebrations delivered to their classroom!



Kieran McCann

Kieran McCann has been nominated for his use of modelling with KS2 pupils when running a STEM club for primary outreach on behalf of Ivor. Kieran used his visualiser along with dramatic poses and descriptive language to ensure that students had a good understanding of the chemical reactions taking place, as well as the key features of a volcano during an eruption. Students learned the importance of detailed and orderly method writing and how to follow steps safely.



Rachel Helm

Rachel has been nominated for her outstanding delivery of curriculum at KS4. Rachel has great relationships with pupils and encourages them to be resilient and hard working whilst mastering challenging topics.



Stuart Ryder

Stuart has been nominated for his excellent teaching and learning in KS3 lessons. Stuart creates a warm environment in which all pupils feel that they can achieve.



Connor Keightley

Connor has been nominated for his excellent use of MWB's. He uses the MWB's to inform any interventions that may need to take place and the immediate responses he gets from the class often means that any misconceptions are dealt with timely and effectively.



Nicola McCawley

Nicola has been nominated for her fantastic use of prompt questions to get students talking out loud about their mathematical explanations. During a lesson with year 7, Nicola used MWBs to gain whole class feedback on problems posed and then asked students to "convince me" that theirs was the right answer or the right method. The routines for use of mini whiteboards and the expectation that everyone should be able to give full and well explained answers was embedded. And led to an outstanding climate for learning.

Reviews

This webinar will provide subject leads, teachers and teaching assistants with practical guidance and support on how to deal with low-level disruption in the classroom, mitigating its impact and promoting positive behaviour to help establish an environment conducive to learning.



Managing Low Level Disruption in Classrooms (Secondary)

This webinar provides secondary school staff with practical guidance on dealing with low-level disruption in the classroom and mitigating its impact.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Reviews

The training video included useful information about the theory behind retrieval practice and strategies that could be used in the classroom.



Use of Spacing & Retrieval Practice in the Classroom

This webinar provides all teaching staff with practical advice and support in delivering effective spacing and retrieval practice in the classroom.

 nationalcollege.com

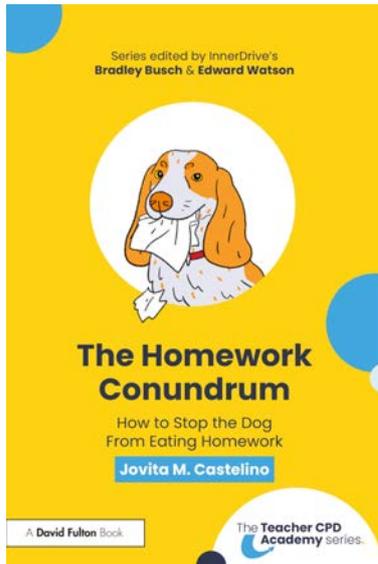
[CLICK HERE](#)



Book and Twitter (X) Recommendations



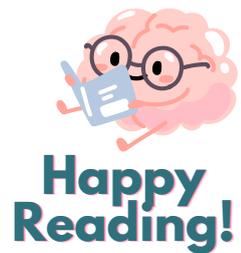
Differentiation and Adaptive Teaching



Homework has a key role to play in strengthening memory, building attainment and helping students to develop transferable, life-long study skills. If done right, regular, good-quality homework has the potential to bridge achievement gaps and help all students become successful, confident learners.

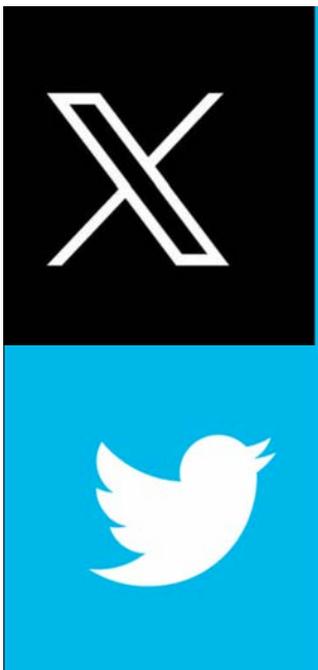
Rooted in robust cognitive science principles, this book provides a clear guide for how a successful homework culture can be built in a school and within the classroom.

Please email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk if you would like to borrow!



The quiz below allows you to evaluate your knowledge and learn some more about the Science of Learning!

[Click here to take the quiz!](#)



Teaching and Learning Development Programme Updates



In this term, we are focusing on the second round of coaching observations.

It has been great to hear about the coaching conversation that were had in school and the impact it has had on your teaching and pedagogy in the last term.

The PDC meetings were an excellent opportunity for all staff to come together and draw ideas together, it was great to see the planning for the presentation evening already beginning!

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention back to the coaching training that we had in September.

We want coaches to be open, to be supportive and to encourage others to get the most out of the experience.

5 Habits of a Great Coach:

1. Being Open

Both parties need to be open to the coaching experience. You should both use open-ended questions so you can draw your own conclusions, or do they direct you to act in a certain direction? The best coaches are good listeners and patient guides so you reach conclusions on your own.

2. Enthusiasm

A good coach will celebrate even the smallest improvements and victories. They read the strengths and weaknesses and create frameworks that encourage, excite, and motivate each other.

3. Empathy

An important part of your partnership is nurturing a safe space to bring your authentic self to every session.

4. Commitment

High-performance coaches work with you even when you feel like giving up. They motivate you and lend support through the good, bad, and ugly parts of the problem-solving process.

5. Trust

Seeking change puts you in a vulnerable headspace, regardless of the situation you're in. A coach should establish a space that's judgment-free where you can trust that what you say is confidential.

LESSON PLANNING

[HTTPS://WWW.TEACHERTOOLKIT.CO.UK/2018/02/11/PLANNING-TRAINEE-TEACHER/](https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2018/02/11/planning-trainee-teacher/)
[HTTPS://WWW.TEACHERTOOLKIT.CO.UK/](https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/)

As a trainee, you will probably be expected to write a detailed lesson plan for your teaching course. At this stage in your career, it's not necessarily a bad idea to lay out in detail each, that first lesson is daunting and of course, you want to be prepared, but where do you start? As a visiting university tutor for trainee teachers, for years I've advocated that lesson planning is a process of thought, not a form-filling exercise. Of course, this stance may not apply to everyone I have mentored, nor each context in which the trainee teacher is working. Context is key.

So, regardless of why, how and what you currently do, with this good news, here is my advice for trainee teachers.

1. Get to know the students you'll be teaching

Before planning your lesson you need to be sure about who it is you are going to teach. Of course, you need the basics – year group, subject, set – but what other information can you find out about the individuals in your class? What are their names? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Are there any children with SEN? What are their likes and dislikes. Look at their data, but also ask other teachers who teach these students for anecdotal evidence. You must triangulate and build up a full picture.

2. Find out what they know

This is particularly important if you are teaching a one-off lesson. Find out what was covered in the last few lessons they have had. You don't want to be repeating content they've already studied or steaming ahead to something they won't understand. Find out what they learnt and ensure the content you decide to teach fits chronologically with the previous lessons.

3. Decide what your aim for the lesson is

Avoid lesson planning traps – particularly ones that focus on interesting activities. One may come across (or try to find) a 'good' activity and then reverse engineer the lesson objectives to match the likely outcomes of the activity. Over time this can become an exercise in *keeping students busy*.



LESSON PLANNING

[HTTPS://WWW.TEACHERTOOLKIT.CO.UK/2018/02/11/PLANNING-TRAINEE-TEACHER/](https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2018/02/11/planning-trainee-teacher/)
[HTTPS://WWW.TEACHERTOOLKIT.CO.UK/](https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/)

4. Focus on the reality

The need for planning lessons will never go away – and if you look in the plan section of our [Learning Policy](#), we encourage our teachers to have ‘evidence of planning’. It doesn’t mean a one-off lesson plan. The main issue with lesson plans I think, is that what happens in the plan is not what happens on the ground.

5. Keep the objectives simple

Too many activities? Too many objectives? Failure to break down the objective and then realise during the lesson you are trying to cover too much, or that you have not differentiated? Or lead a ‘starter’ that works against the intended learning? Over-planning generally leads to ‘under-learning’.

6. Focus on the learning

Too often, lesson planning begins without focus on the learning, planning without considering where students are and where the teacher wants them to get to; the wider picture is not examined. Why not consider;

- Where are the students starting from?
- Where do you want the students to get to?
- How will you know when they are there?
- How can you best help them get there?

Finally and perhaps most importantly ...

7. Don’t try and do everything!

You are a trainee teacher in your first few terms of teaching. There is a lot to learn. It’s better to focus on one or two elements that you want to practice and refine in this lesson, than to try to cram in everything you’ve learnt so far and not really do any of them properly. If you refine for example your AfL techniques in this lesson, then next time they will come more naturally to you and you can move on to adding in a new starter technique without overloading yourself.

