

Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES
SCHOOL



November 2025



Winter Warmers!

As we approach the final few weeks before Christmas, the school is as vibrant and energetic as ever.

As ever at Sharples, it's great to see the vast amount of opportunities that are given to our pupils in everything we do.

Y11 pupils have just completed their first round of mocks and have already been accessing high quality interventions, Y9 have begun preparations for their assessments in January and the process will be supported by a rigorous timetable that will enable students to become more independent as they eventually go on to prepare for Y10.

As well as this, events like Diversity Day; Sharples Aspiring Events; trips and more mean that it's important than ever that our routines continue to be consistent.

Routines allow for teachers to focus on high quality teaching and learning and for students to experience a reliable and consistent experience in all classrooms across the school.

Going forward, our routines and expectations of all pupils need to remain consistently high to ensure all students are able to achieve and succeed in any classroom.

With all that said, I hope you enjoy the final few weeks of the term before the holidays are quickly be upon us!

In this newsletter you can expect:

Article on CPD by Aamina Amdavadi

Article on supporting Disadvantaged Pupils

Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!

Sharples Staff Section

CPD Book Recommendations

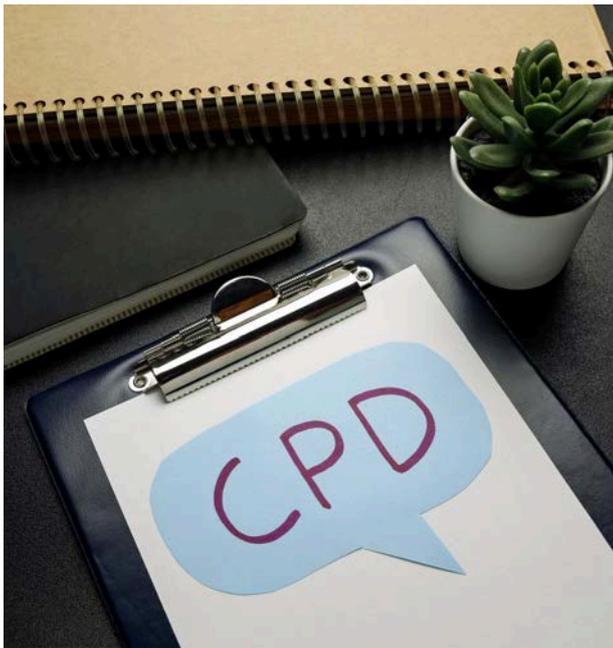
X / Twitter Shoutouts

Updates on the Teaching and Learning Development programme



Spotlight on English: Building a Culture of Continuous Professional Growth

Since September, the English Department has strengthened its commitment to continuous professional development through a new initiative designed to make high-quality CPD both accessible and relevant for all colleagues. Throughout the term, I have shared a wide range of free online CPD opportunities with the team. These have included short webinars, subject-specific podcasts, research-informed training sessions, and materials from national organisations. This is in addition to the departmental CPD we each lead at every department meeting as well.



The aim has been simple: to create a sustainable culture of ongoing professional learning that empowers teachers to take ownership of their development. By signposting a variety of CPD sources, colleagues are able to select sessions that match their interests, address areas for growth, and complement the department's priorities such as reading fluency, oracy, and grammar.

This approach has helped to:

- Promote autonomy by allowing staff to engage with CPD that genuinely supports their practice.
- Strengthen subject pedagogy through exposure to current thinking and emerging research in English teaching.
- Support workload by ensuring CPD is accessible, flexible, free, and easy to engage with on teachers' own terms.
- Build shared expertise as staff regularly bring insights from these sessions into discussions, enriching classroom practice.

The response from members of the team has been overwhelmingly positive, with colleagues highlighting the value of having high-quality CPD "in their inbox" and the renewed sense of professional curiosity this has fostered.

As we move into the next half term, I will continue to share CPD opportunities and explore ways to weave this learning into collaborative practice, ensuring that our students benefit from teaching that is reflective, research-informed, and continually evolving. If anybody would like to know more about this approach, feel free to get in touch



Supporting our Disadvantaged Pupils : A Whistle Stop Tour

When thinking about the topic for this month's newsletter, I wanted to write about something that was pertinent to our school and our priorities.

As we have a whole school push and drive on the outcomes for pupil premium pupils, I believed it would be useful to look at why we are driving these pupils forward and what we can do as teachers to provide high quality teaching environments consistently across the school.

Supporting disadvantaged pupils is a priority for all teachers across the country, not just at Sharples. The trends indicate that the gap is widening and at the end of their academic journey, it is more likely that Pupil Premium students will suffer compared to non-disadvantaged students.

Ultimately, this just isn't fair and when we look at the pupils in our care and the backgrounds they come from, we need to recognise our role in their futures. Succeeding in the core and having a strong set of GCSE results to support pupils will allow for pupils to feel ambitious in their life choices when going forward.



When looking at the EEF research, they recommend a three-tiered model, but at the heart of what they suggest lies high quality teaching.



When reflecting on our lessons and our planning, we need to consider what equates to high quality teaching.

High-quality teaching in secondary includes:

- Explicit instruction and careful modelling of complex concepts
- Frequent and well-designed formative assessment to identify misconceptions
- Strong behaviour and routines that create “optimum learning conditions”
- A focus on disciplinary literacy — supporting students to read, write and speak like subject experts

The EEF emphasise the importance of disciplinary Literacy and the way it is the role of all teachers to improve the outcomes of all pupils.

To do this, teachers should be:

- Teaching Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary explicitly in every subject
- Modelling subject-specific reading strategies (e.g., extracting data in science, annotation in English, skimming/scanning in humanities)
- Structuring extended writing with planning scaffolds or sentence stems
- Using oracy routines (structured talk, debate, rehearsal) to deepen conceptual understanding.

Although this may be a brief reminder, I feel that if we start with small steps, huge impacts can be made.

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!



Patrick Foster

He has done some exceptional work on the use of AI to mark exam questions and produce model answers. He has fed it prompts so that it marks exactly to AQA specification.



Christine Smith

Christine Smith actively teaches assonance by repeating the individual sounds a poem makes. I often hear her 'cawing' like a hawk to get students to think about the oracy of the poem and the writer's intentions



Owain Jenkins

I observed Mr. Jenkins teaching a lesson on the James Bulger case, which can be both sensitive to discuss and distressing to hear for students. His exposition was excellent and he spent about 15-20 minutes describing the details respectfully but with great impact. You could hear a pin drop as he explained how rare a case of this nature was, how it shocked the country, and the difficulties people might face when finding motivations for a crime so harrowing. He used dramatic pause, images on screen, and even google maps to highlight missed opportunities and to situate pupils in the reality of the case.

I've been taught about this case both at school and in university and I have to say this is the best exposition I've seen on the subject.

Sharples Staff Section

In this part of the newsletter, we want to discover more about the staff at Sharples and the incredible work they do on a daily basis.

Each month, one member of staff will feature and we will discover more about their background and how they ended up at Sharples.

This month, Jaren Baldwin has kindly detailed more about his experience into teaching.



1. How long have you been working at Sharples?

I started working at Sharples in September 2024.

2. Why did you want to go into teaching?

I was always very inspired by my teachers, especially my music teachers, and I wanted to help inspire the next generation of musicians! I also love the energy of teaching and being in the school environment where every day is different.

3. Where did you study and was there a module / topic that you were really passionate about during your time at university?

I studied Music at the Royal Northern College of Music for 4 years. Most of my course was performance based which I loved and led to lots of exciting musical opportunities. My favourite topic was chamber music as we were able to rehearse weekly with a small group of musicians and form our own chamber group. We often got to showcase our work in public performances and it is something that we have been able to continue after university. I still play with my chamber group now! In my third year I was also able to take a pedagogy module which first introduced me into the world of teaching music!

4. What is the best part of your job?

Seeing students enjoying playing music, learning new things and making new friends with people they may not have met otherwise.

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5. What are you most passionate about in terms of teaching and learning?

Everyone has the opportunity to achieve and celebrate progress! I also find that the use of questioning works very well in the music classroom and I can see very quickly which elements students are confident with and which areas need to be covered more. It can also add an element of competition or challenge with mini quizzes and students wanting to get full marks!

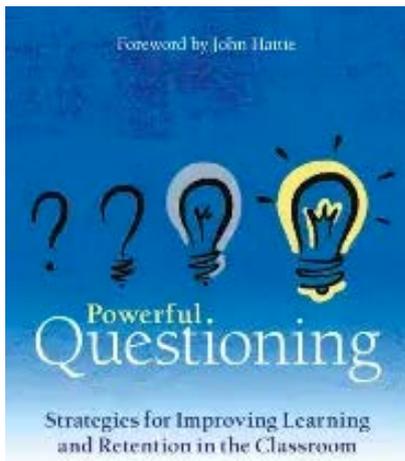
6. What are the non-negotiables in your classroom?

Routines! With so much equipment in the classroom and lots of it being needed each lesson, consistent routines are very important. I also feel that a non-negotiable attitude to learning in my classroom is that everyone tries their best. Music is something that some students have had lots of experience with and others have had very little so it's important to create an atmosphere where it is okay to get things wrong.

7. If you could share one element of best practice with the rest of the staff, what would it be?

Using lots of praise! Music can be really tricky and I always make sure to praise individual students when they are practicing to show that I recognise their hard work and resilience!

Book and Twitter (X) Recommendations



Powerful Questioning

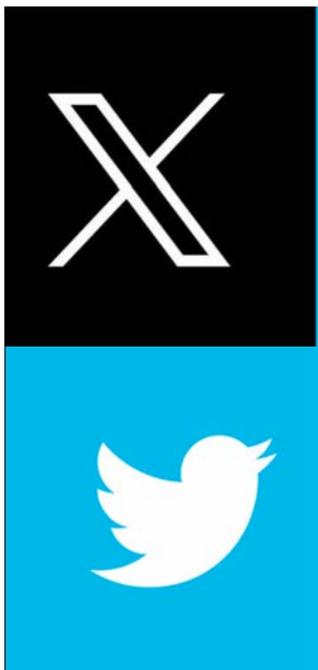
Questioning is a staple feature of a teacher's toolkit across all phases of education. Classrooms are awash with explanation, modelling and feedback, but of all the pedagogical strategies at a teacher's disposal, questioning is one of the most important. It is the heartbeat of a classroom. While the art of asking a question seems relatively straightforward, to what extent do teachers consider the types of questions they're using?

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

Checking for Understanding

A thread that breaks down checking for understanding in the classroom, supported by research and evidence.

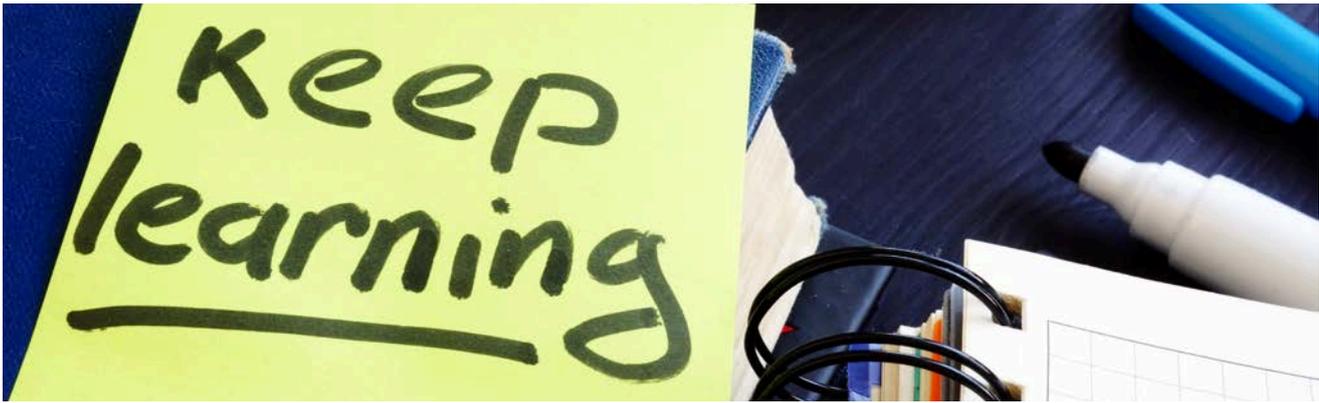
[Click here to view the thread](#)



Happy Reading!



Teaching and Learning Development Programme Updates



The feedback from the CPD sessions last term was overwhelmingly positive. Here are some examples below!

The CPD training was very enjoyable and extremely beneficial. I particularly appreciated the opportunity to share ideas with other staff members and learn from their experiences. Thank you.

- Danielle Stephenson

Really informative. The good practice documentaries were really helpful for watching different strategies in action. It was good to speak to other departments to see how different departments put good practice into action.

- Hollie Elias

I really enjoyed how the theories were applied to what we could accomplish within a classroom.

- Collette Grimshaw

Excellent session with lots of information to take forward, strategies to use and books to read. It is good to get to know approaches that other departments use.

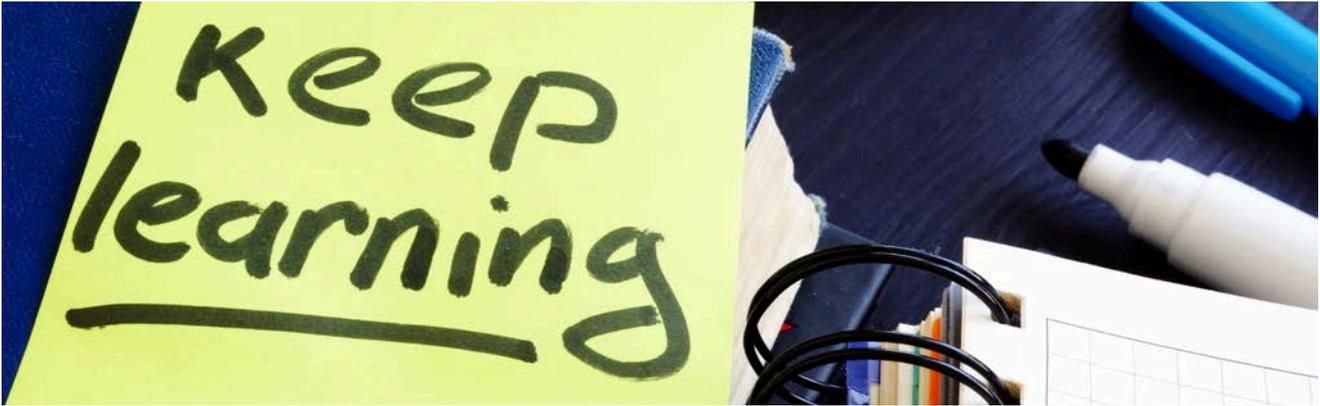
- Clare Tonge

Nicole was wonderful - I have learnt a lot from this CPD session and I can see her expertise clearly

- Philippa McManus

Thank you for reading!

Teaching and Learning Development Programme Updates



The feedback from the CPD sessions last term was overwhelmingly positive. Here are some examples below!

The session gave a really good background picture of how pupils learn to read. I found the information relating to "Scarborough's Reading Rope" particularly interesting and helpful in understanding the barriers faced when learning to read.

- Lucie Melmoth

An informative session detailing how phonics is taught at primary school and the expectations of the knowledge that pupils have when entering secondary school.

- Nicola Mccawley

I really enjoyed the session ,I liked the fact that it was interactive and I came back with new ideas for my lessons.

- Ramona Mitrea

Fiona was extremely knowledgeable and staff in the session engaged well with her. Lots of useful material to take forward into my own classroom teaching.

- Claire Finney

Thank you for reading!
