

Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES
SCHOOL



February 2026



Keeping up the Pace!

As the daffodils you may have spotted last month finally begin to bloom across the school grounds, there is a distinct shift in the atmosphere. The "spring term slump" is officially behind us, and in its place is the unmistakable hum of a school in its most critical time. While the mornings are brighter, the countdown clocks in our Year 11 classrooms feel louder than ever.

However, rather than letting the closeness of the summer series cause nausea, this is the month to lean into our momentum and adrenaline. Nationally, the conversation in education is shifting toward "The Final 10%"—that crucial period where we move from teaching new content to the forensic closing of gaps.

The recent mocks provided the roadmap; now, our focus is the journey. We want more pupils to move from "I can't do this" into "I know how to gain these marks" as the looming exam season approaches.

The Bolton weather might still be unpredictable, but our school culture shouldn't be. Thank you for your continued vigilance with the morning line-ups and corridor transitions. These small wins in consistency are the bedrock that allows the high-level learning to happen inside the four walls of your classrooms.

Remember, Our students take their emotional cues from us—if we are calm, focused, and rigorous, they will be too.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Article on Teaching the Bolton Student

Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!

Sharples Staff Section

CPD Book Recommendations

X / Twitter Shoutouts

Updates on the Teaching and Learning Development programme



Breaking down Bolton's Barriers

As we move through the spring term, it's easy to get caught up in the data drops and the marking piles. PPEs have come to a close and most students will be anxiously anticipating their results, as well as Y9 pupils eager to begin their option taster sessions. Throw in the mix of World Book Week and STEM week and it seems like a typical half term at Sharples (not to mention Ramadhan!)

Whilst this can seem like we are spinning 100 plates, to be truly effective in our classrooms, we have to look out the window at the town our students and many staff members call home. By understanding the specific context and experiences of the pupils that we serve, it is more likely we will be able to support those who are the most deprived in our classrooms.



Although the pastoral care at Sharples is wonderful, it truly does take a village to raise a child and to get them the best outcomes! Therefore, supporting and raising the aspirations of all our pupils is a job for every staff member.

Bolton Barrier: Language and Literacy

In 2026, the gap between "corridor talk" and "exam talk" remains one of the biggest hurdles. Research shows that Bolton still faces significant educational disadvantage, with 45% of our children living in households experiencing poverty.

At Sharples, we are serving pupils that come from all different backgrounds, and often the academic 'Tier 2 vocabulary', words like *evaluate*, *consistent*, or *subsequent* can feel like a foreign language. When a student struggles to articulate an answer, it's often not a lack of intelligence, but a lack of "linguistic capital."

Therefore, as teachers, we're not here to "fix" the Bolton accent—it's a badge of identity. Our job is to teach code-switching. Code switching refers to the ability to shift between different languages, dialects, or registers depending on the social context.



At Sharples, this usually means a student navigating the gap between their "home identity" (Greater Manchester dialect, local slang, or a heritage language) and the "academic identity" required for exams and professional life. A nice analogy to use is to refer to code switching not as correcting a students' speech, but expanding their linguistic toolbox.

Many of our pupils—particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds—view academic language as "acting posh" or "not being themselves." We don't want to push pupils to the point where they feel like their identity is being removed. We should be motivating and equipping them with the best possible avenues for them to succeed.

Breaking down Bolton's Barriers

At Sharples, we have a wonderful programme of Literacy interventions and oracy is soon becoming more and more embedded within classrooms, we need to continue on this positive trajectory to ensure we break down this barrier seamlessly.



Inspiring Local Industry

One of the most frequent questions we hear in secondary school is, "*When am I ever going to use this?*" In Bolton, we have the answer right on our doorstep. 2026 is a massive year for the town's regeneration, including the £40m Bolton Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS) and the ongoing £1bn Health Innovation Bolton project. There is a booming logistics sector at Logistics North (employing over 5,500 people) and a burgeoning tech hub in the town center at The Wellsprings. Sometimes, using these statistics and real life scenarios might bring the abstract into reality for our students. It may feel like letter writing, percentage increases and looking at historical figures might not be something they see as relevant in their daily lives, but reframing it as the skills needed in future careers is a great way to establish not only strong career links, but foster strong relationships too. With National Careers Week right around the corner, it's definitely worth having a conversation with pupils about their aspirations for the future

and how the work they are doing in lessons can contribute to their dreams.

The "Hidden" Carer: Supporting Bolton's Unsung Heroes

Recent data suggests there are at least 1,200 young carers in Bolton, though the true figure is likely much higher as many remain "hidden." Nationally, young carers miss an average of 27 school days per year, and in secondary schools, they are twice as likely to be persistently absent compared to their peers. The form tutor conversations that have been taking place this year should be an opportunity for form tutors to get to know and understand the pupils that they have in their care much better. Attendance should be a priority in these conversations and the new attendance competitions should act as an incentive for students to get into school and stay in!

As ever, we need to have the same high expectations of all our pupils, but at times, some may need some more support than others and this can come in the form of a simple good morning, or praise for being in school and doing well.

Developing Relationships

This week, try the 3:1 challenge. For every one sanction or negative reminder you give a "tough" student, try to find three micro-moments of positive reinforcement. In a school like Sharples, where community ties are tight, being known as a consistent teacher who shows up, shares expert subject knowledge and gives students the tools to succeed is the most powerful intervention we have.

SHARPLES CELEBRATES!

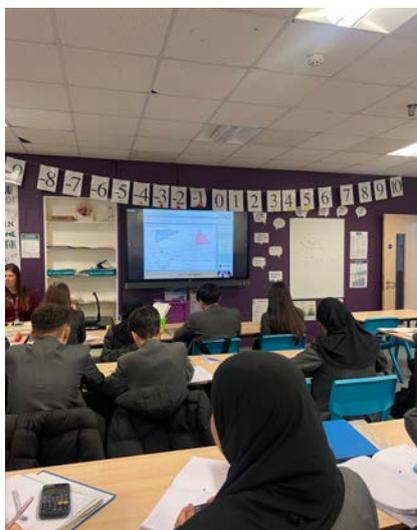


Each month we want to shout out teachers who want to share excellent practice! The first 3 teachers to email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk with an example of brilliant practice will receive a box of celebrations delivered to their classroom!



Iqrah Hassan

Iqrah creates a wonderful environment in her classroom, particularly for her Y7 pupils as she encourages them to be ambitious, work hard and is relentless in her questioning. She uses the Sharples Routines brilliantly and encourages 100% participation. The students feel very welcome in her classroom and are always attempting to impress her.



Nicole McCawley

Nicola uses clearly established routines, she models effectively and students work brilliantly during her talk tasks with shoulder partner pairs. These pairs are clearly planned effectively to ensure maximum engagement from the students. Nicola always creates a warm and welcoming environment.



Nicole Topham

Nicole is a relentless member of staff, she tries her best to take every opportunity for the students and is raising the flag for EAL / INA students brilliantly. She has worked with some very tough groups, but with the routines and her positivity, they are making great progress. In addition, her contribution to World Book Day has been a massive help.

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, Hayley Glenholme has kindly detailed more about her experience in teaching.



1. How long have you been working at Sharples?

September 2023

2. Why did you decide to go into teaching?

I sort of fell into it after my Masters degree and entered this new world of creativity and fun! I didn't know how fulfilling teaching could be. I could be passionate and get paid for it and that suited me. It was the first time I felt a feeling of accomplishment when I received feedback for my lessons and that feeling became addictive!

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

I completed a Biology BSc degree at Liverpool John Moores and then an MSc, masters degree in Biosystems and Informatics at the University of Liverpool. I enjoyed looking at the difference in the genomes of different parasites of nematodes, particularly at the 'cousins' of the malaria causing parasite! Which genes are only found in the malaria causing parasite? I know (the pieces of code)! Then I ran those gene codes into a computer system against all other known genomes to see which living things also had these 'special genes' to see what advantage it gave them.

4. What is the best part of your job?

Being creative and enthusiastic about science has been part of my life since I was little, growing up on a farm. I won't tell you the things I got up to here- they are stories for the classroom, in context! I enjoy breaking down difficult concepts into simpler ones and giving students a sense of achievement. I also love having an audience who will laugh at my jokes!

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

I enjoy reading the latest on the different areas of teaching and learning from X (Twitter), EEF, podcasts by Craig Barton or Adam Boxer and all of the research the trainee teachers talk about from their University courses. My main passion has been Feedback and Formative Assessment- a course that some of you will have attended during the whole school CPD. I feel like John Hattie and Dylan William 'are old friends' but Kate Jones was just as awesome in person when I met her recently. I absolutely love reading about the ongoing research about all areas of teaching and learning, which allows me to have great debates and reflections with the trainee teachers.

6. What do you wish the teaching staff knew about your job?

I like to be firm but fair. I always give a warning, but the non-negotiables have to be no talking during silent entry and students must listen to one another when one speaks.

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

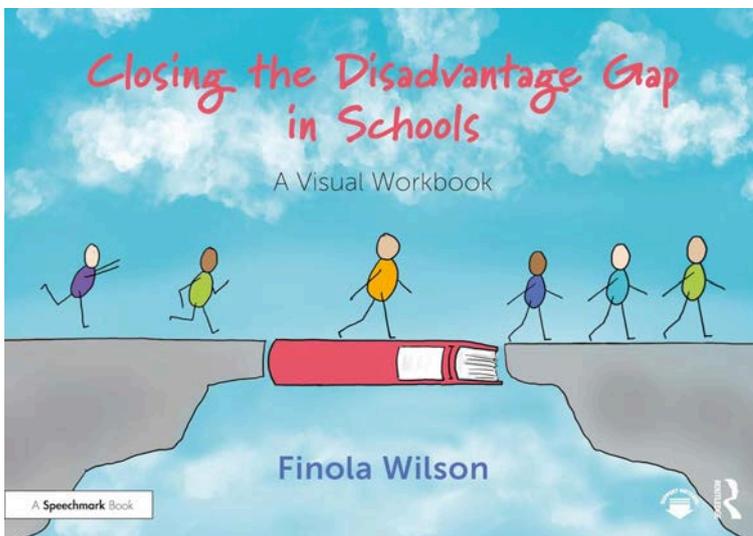
I am currently looking into ways to observe lessons and I would love any research to be sent my way on good ways to observe lessons- what the observer should say/ look out for. But if I was to pick something I'm proud of, it would be relationships with students. I try to praise all where required and make everyone feel included, so they are in the correct mind set to learn and face challenges in lessons by actively participating.



Book and Twitter (X) Recommendations

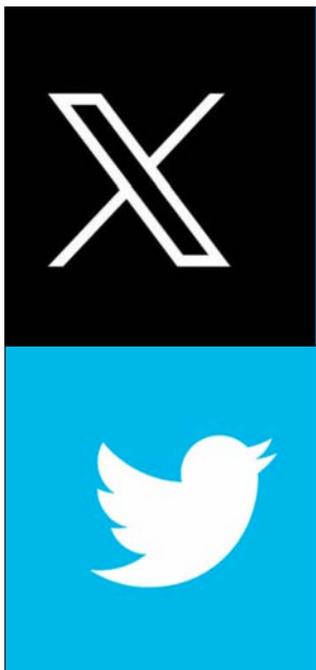


Closing the Disadvantaged Gap



Closing the Disadvantage Gap in Schools helps teachers and school leaders to understand what educational disadvantage is and what research tells us are the “best bets” for making sure this disadvantage doesn’t stop these children from succeeding in life.

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



We’ve learnt about memory but it is not reflected in classroom tasks we provide

This link takes you to a Substack on how memory is effectively manipulated in the classroom!

An interesting read!

- [Click here to view the thread](#)

Happy Reading!



Teaching and Learning Development Programme Updates



Sharples Teaching and Learning Routines

Whole School Behaviour Curriculum

Silent Entry, meet and greet

End of lessons silent behind desks/uniform check prior to lesson exit

End of day routine - exit with teacher

Teaching and Learning routines

3, 2, 1 eyes on me

Shoulder partners

MWB usage

Questioning routine

Active learners, active teachers - students sitting up tracking the teacher and teachers being up and active with the students.

Coaching

In Spring term 2, teachers should be working with each other and observing each other to offer feedback and develop their own teaching.

Thank you for reading!
