Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy

Last reviewed: November 2025

Next review due by: September 2026

We do things differently......

H.E.R.E

High Standards
Empathy
Resilience
Emotional Response

Aims of Teaching, Learning and Assessment at The Kassia Academy

The aim of Teaching, Learning and Assessment at The Kassia Academy is to provide high quality education using trauma informed approaches, which inspires pupils to re-engage with education, has a positive impact on all young people and results in fostering empathy, resilience and strategies to cope with their emotional responses. We believe this prepares our students for the future.

Policy Development

The policy has been developed through:

- SWOT analysis of curriculum Autumn 2024
- Ofsted feedback Spring 2024
- Consultation from Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment with Kassia staff
- A SWOT analysis of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policies and practices at Kassia using feedback from staff and parents/carers.
- Self-evaluation tools from associations such as Educational Endowment Fund and The Key
- Contextual analysis of learners needs
- Pupil voice
- Curriculum feedback from ex HMI
- Ofsted feedback
- Consultation with T& L middle leaders
- All teachers and governors have been consulted in developing this policy, which summarises expectations and common working practices.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment – Rationale

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear and effective instructional leadership model for developing a clear vision and positive culture towards Teaching, Learning and Assessment that:

- Ensures consistently high standards of Teaching, Learning and Assessment through an evidenced based, shared pedagogical model.
- Maintain rigorous leadership and management to monitor and evaluate the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment on pupil's outcomes.
- Ensure that pupils who have experienced trauma or have other barriers to learning receive opportunities to learn, retain knowledge and succeed.

Please note that further policies relating to Teaching, Learning and Assessment, and subject specific pedagogies, have more in-depth policy development information in the respective policies

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy - Vision

Our vision and purpose for our curriculum stems from Biesta (2009) who states these key components for success for learners:

- Qualification – this can be work, citizenship or further study
- Socialisation – learners become a part of society, learning norms, knowledge and

values
- Subjectification – making sense of themselves, others and their place in the world

Biesta's values underpin our Curriculum and Teaching, Learning and Assessment approaches at Kassia. These are based on establishing a clear vision that inspires and helps create a unified set of values and beliefs to drive an ambitious learning culture where aspirations for learners is high.

We will lead our vision by successfully implementing an instructional leadership model, which will result in consistently high standards of teaching practice, embedding a positive culture between staff and hence improved educational outcomes for pupils at our school

Background

Our pupils face a number of barriers to their education, as written in our Curriculum Policy and contextual analysis. One of the barriers our children face is having a high number of ACES (adverse childhood experiences) or traumas.

Ofsted

In our most recent OFSTED June 2024 Teaching and Learning was highlighted as successful – 'The school has designed an ambitious curriculum, which is enriched with many memorable experiences. The school has created different pathways, which indicate what pupils will learn as they move from Year 7 to Year 11. Teachers are trained well. They are highly skilled at delivering the curriculum successfully in most subjects. The school's assessment system is used effectively. Typically, teachers check whether pupils' learning is secure. Pupils regularly revisit the essential knowledge outlined in the curriculum'.

Research

Research has demonstrated that childhood trauma is associated with a range of potential difficulties at school, such as low academic performance; low attendance rates; memory and attention problems; language difficulties; and higher exclusion rates (Perfect, Turley, Carlson, Yohanna, & Saint Gilles, 2016).

Trauma can further negatively affect a pupil's ability to self-regulate and utilise executive functions (ie. Working memory, organisation, emotional control, Dawson and Guare 2009), which can therefore affect a pupil's ability to engage with their learning and engage emotionally and socially throughout their education (Perfect et al., 2016).

This is because trauma changes the architecture of the brain, by triggering harmful inflammation in the brain and the body, which can negatively affect the development of core physical and cognitive functions (Bomber, 2020; Perry, 2009). Physiological factors, such as stress, play a significant part in how well we retain information, whereas our brains are good at storing information that helps us to avoid physical or psychological harm. We also tend to remember experiences that trigger powerful emotions – such as fear
– for longer. This evidences the challenge our learners face in overcoming our brain's natural responses, making learning more difficult.
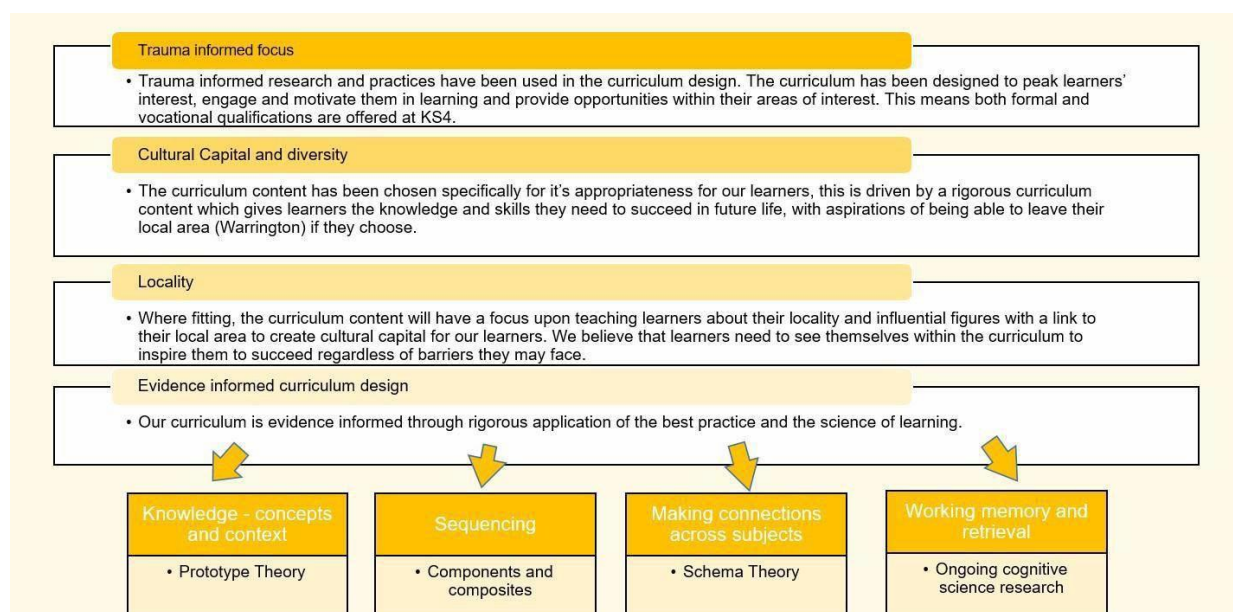
So What?

As a whole, our pupils have difficulty learning to learn, retaining and retrieving memories and having the oracy and literacy skills needed to succeed in later life. Therefore, these are the areas in which our Teaching, Learning and Assessment focuses on throughout school.

Main aims of the Kassia curriculum

- To re-engage the most disengaged learners with an education that is bespoke to them and provide them with a curriculum that will support their further education, training and their employability.

- To address learners' widest gaps in education by developing basic skills in literacy and oracy across the curriculum in order to prepare our learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

- To ensure that we have a broad and balanced curriculum offer for our learners to build upon learners' strengths and interests to inspire them to hold high aspirations for their future

- To develop our learners' cultural capital, for us this is providing learners with the opportunities to experience people, places and things that contribute towards the essential knowledge that learners need in order to be educated citizens. To promote learners' physical health and personal development which includes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental development of learners at the school in order to prepare our learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life outside of Warrington.
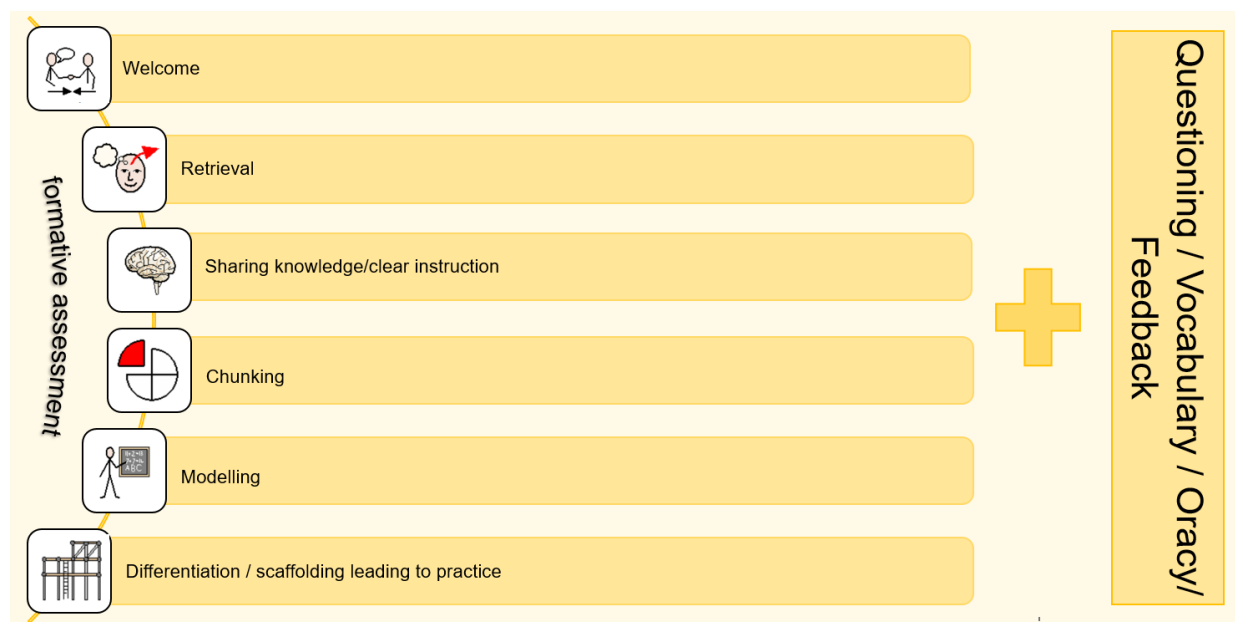
The guiding principles of our curriculum

Trauma informed focus
- Trauma informed research and practices have been used in the curriculum design. The curriculum has been designed to peak learners' interest, engage and motivate them in learning and provide opportunities within their areas of interest. This means both formal and vocational qualifications are offered at KS4.

Cultural Capital and diversity
- The curriculum content has been chosen specifically for it's appropriateness for our learners, this is driven by a rigorous curriculum content which gives learners the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in future life, with aspirations of being able to leave their local area (Warrington) if they choose.

Locality
- Where fitting, the curriculum content will have a focus upon teaching learners about their locality and influential figures with a link to their local area to create cultural capital for our learners. We believe that learners need to see themselves within the curriculum to inspire them to succeed regardless of barriers they may face.

Evidence informed curriculum design
- Our curriculum is evidence informed through rigorous application of the best practice and the science of learning.

Knowledge - concepts and context	Sequencing	Making connections across subjects	Working memory and retrieval
• Prototype Theory	• Components and composites	• Schema Theory	• Ongoing cognitive science research

Foundations

At The Kassia Academy staff are trained in Trauma Informed practice. We recognise that in order for our learners to engage in education they need: strong, respectful and caring relationships, calm and safe environments, consistency in all aspects of their education and structure and routine. These foundations are integral to our learners successfully re-engaging with their education.

Lesson Structure

formative assessment (left vertical label)

- Welcome
- Retrieval
- Sharing knowledge/clear instruction
- Chunking
- Modelling
- Differentiation / scaffolding leading to practice

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Questioning / Vocabulary / Oracy/ Feedback (right vertical label)
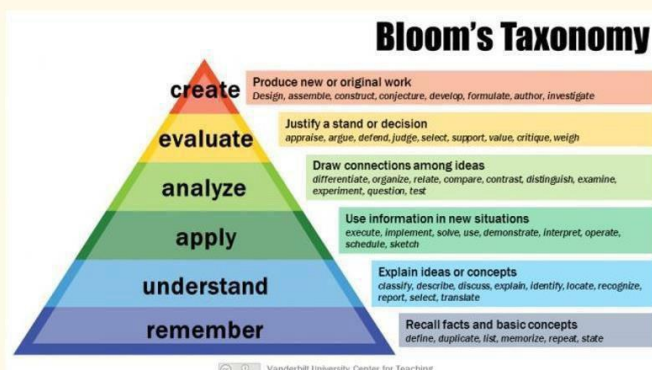
Teaching Strategies

At The Kassia Academy and Support Services we believe that outstanding teaching leads to outstanding outcomes for our learners. With this in mind our Teaching, Learning and Assessment approach is based around highly regarded educational principles such as Rosenshine's principles of direct instruction, Blooms Taxonomy and Elklan vocabulary techniques. These teaching strategies underpin the delivery of our learning at The Kassia Academy and support our Trauma Informed approach to education.

Questioning

- At Kassia we think about the pedagogy behind Blooms taxonomy to plan the right questions, frame them with the correct choice of language and ensure the level of challenge is appropriate for your learner.

- This is not only an effective method of both formative assessment and differentiation, but also supports purposeful conversations within the class allowing learners to make links to prior learning, use key vocabulary and practice their oracy skills.

- Bloom's taxonomy questioning allows teachers to ask probing questions which in turn deepens knowledge gathering from the learners.

Bloom's Taxonomy

- **create** — Produce new or original work
  Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate
- **evaluate** — Justify a stand or decision
  appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh
- **analyze** — Draw connections among ideas
  differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test
- **apply** — Use information in new situations
  execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch
- **understand** — Explain ideas or concepts
  classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate
- **remember** — Recall facts and basic concepts
  define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

Speech and Language

Speech and Language Support

At Kassia we recognise that our learners require additional speech and language support. Our staff are trained in delivering Elklan speech, language and communications techniques. Incorporating the Elklan pedagogy behind learning vocabulary ensures our learners receive the speech and language support they need.

Elklan techniques encourage learners to use a wider and appropriate choice of language. We use ELKLAN techniques to learn vocabulary both in class and in interventions. We also use "say it (praise), say it again, how can you say it better?" to embed subject specific terminology and ambitious vocabulary.

Example ELKLAN document for learning new vocabulary.

Oracy

In addition to the training around Elklan strategies Kassia staff have worked closely with our SENDCO and Voice 21 focusing on implementing a high-quality oracy education using a tailored oracy framework.

Voice 21 have supported staff members with training around modelling correct intonation, appropriate vocabulary and conversation skills when speaking to each other and the learners.

Staff encourage purposeful classroom talk in their classrooms, guided by a teacher, who asks probing questions.

Key phrases for turn taking, and building on conversations are in classrooms as a scaffold for pupils to develop their speaking and listening are built into general classroom practice.

Steplab and Oracy

This academic year there will be an investment in supporting teaching and learning through Steplab, which is an instructional coaching process. This involves one teacher working with another teacher, to help them take small, personalised steps to improve their practice. Instructional coaches help the teachers to get better by doing two things on a regular basis.

Rationale on Instructional Coaching (StepLab)

Over the last decade, studies have accumulated considerable evidence supporting the effectiveness of instructional coaching. In 2011, a team of researchers published the results from a randomised controlled trial of the My Teaching Partner instructional coaching programme, showing that it improved results on Virginia state secondary school tests by an effect size of 0.22 (Allen et al, 2011).

In 2015, the same team of researchers published the results from a second, larger randomised controlled trial of the My Teaching Partner programme, which found similar positive effects on test scores (Allen et al, 2015).

This evidence from replicated randomised controlled trials provides strong evidence that instructional coaching
can work.

When the Adults Change (WTAC)

At The Kassia Academy we have also invested heavily in staff CPD using where the Adults Change to help support our young learner's journey into adulthood. In a world where unprecedented uncertainty, economic poverty and technological overload is the norm, our children and young people have been hit hard. It is more difficult for
children and young people to find emotional safety. It is more challenging for them to develop the appropriate social, emotional and mental resources that they need to thrive.

The cognitive profile of young people has changed; they find it hard to regulate and find themselves in a heightened state of arousal more of the time. In their cognitively formative years, our young people are not always developing healthy social norms, responsible decision-making skills, self-confidence or resilience. They are learning to be on high alert, to be distrusting of the world around them and to rely on virtual interaction rather than human relationships.

We have identified that we need to be more flexible and to a certain degree, it is our mind-set that needs to change to meet the needs of the learners. It is consistently modelled and supported by our staff who are consistently fair. We do however understand the need to teach our children a high-quality curriculum, but we also need to create a culture that develops their cognitive capabilities and ensures that they can access what they need and make them the best versions of themselves to stand the best chance in life.

Marking and Feedback Responsibilities

In order that learners make progress it is essential that the quality and consistency of marking and feedback is established and adhered to across the school. It is the responsibility of the SLT to ensure that all learners work is marked in accordance with the policy.

Marking and assessment must be a part of the planning process in order that teachers are aware of learners' starting points and progress made. Accurate assessment and informed planning will result in learners' knowledge and understanding being extended and challenged in every lesson and ensuring that progress is made by all.
Teachers must ensure that all assessment procedures are integrated into schemes of work and be, meaningful, attainable and consistent:

- Feedback is focused upon supporting learner's progress
- Learners are clear where in their work they have improved in response to feedback and feed forward.
- Marking refers to previous comments and learners' individual targets.
- Speaking and listening is a big part of feedback ensuring that meaning is not lost in translation through complicated vocabulary not meeting the needs of the learner
- Oracy is vital in verbal feedback (VF) to articulate ideas and thoughts, influence through talking, and give the learner confidence to express their views.
- Marking for Writing

Feedback

Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement and should be used to 'reduce discrepancies between current understandings/performance and a desired goal' (Hattie and Timperley 2007). Effective feedback can be used to enhance teachers' effectiveness in the classroom and learners' achievement. Effective feedback must answer three major questions:

- Where am I going? (What are my goals?)
- How am I getting there? (What progress is being made toward the goal?)
- Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)

Feed Up – Feedback – Feed Forward (Hattie and Timperley 2007)

There is evidence to suggest that feedback involving metacognitive and self-regulatory approaches may have a greater impact on disadvantaged learners and lower prior attainers than other learners may. Learners require clear and actionable feedback to employ metacognitive strategies as they learn, as this information informs their understanding of their specific strengths and areas for improvement, thereby indicating which learning strategies have been effective for them in previously completed work (Education Endowment Fund).

Different methods of feedback delivery can be effective and feedback should not be limited exclusively to written marking. Studies of verbal feedback show slightly higher impacts overall (+7 months according to EEF). However, at Kassia we carefully consider how feedback will be received, including impacts on self- confidence and motivation. Where learners can cope emotionally with written feedback, it will be given, using the literacy feedback code. Where learners are currently triggered by written feedback, verbal feedback and coaching will be given.

Oracy feedback in context of the learning

Feedback, is only powerful when understood by the intended recipient and their derived meaning is used to further develop their knowledge. In context we can assume that not everything that is read is understood, but meaning explained can be more easily digested. It is important that we revisit written feedback to support the learning intentions to the pupil. We can support our verbal feedback by ensuring new vocabulary has its meaning and use modelled/explained to the recipient, so it is understood in context.

We can further support explanations/feedback by using the Think, Puzzle and Explain Framework (Harvard Graduate School of Education). This framework for talk is useful for inquiry learning because it connects to prior knowledge, sparks curiosity and allows planning for the exploration of the new topic. The framework consists of three key questions to promote student discussion:

- What do you now think you know about a topic?
- What questions or puzzles do you still have?
- How can you/us further explore this topic?

Writing Marking will be visible in all books across the curriculum. Staff at Kassia Academy and Support Services mark for literacy using the following feedback code:

Symbol	Meaning of symbol
√	Good work/point made
√√	Excellent work/ point made
©	Capital letter needed
X	Incorrect point
Sp	Spelling error
P	Punctuation mistake
//	New paragraph
?	This doesn't make sense/ confusing point
〰〰〰〰〰	Poor sentence structure or grammatical error
Rep	Repetition of an idea/ point
VF	Verbal feedback

In addition to this, teachers mark in purple pen and will highlight something a learner has completed or learned effectively. It is particularly important to provide feedback when work is correct, rather than just using it to identify errors. This not only opens up our learners to receiving feedback but also is purposeful in showing them what they can already do, as well as what they need to do next. Learners use a green pen to respond to their written or verbal feedback. Misconceptions in learning and concepts is addressed while on task with the children and this can be identified with the adult using the verbal feedback symbol within the work.

Teachers will use clear success criteria both as a scaffold for learners to complete their work but also as a method for feedback, giving instant feedback on what learners have done well and what they may need to do to improve their work further. At the start of all new topics in English and PBL (Project Based Learning) the children have a knowledge organiser to support learning within the topic including vocabulary to create a golden thread through the creative learning. Staff at Kassia use both verbal and written feedback throughout the lessons. Where learners can cope emotionally with written feedback, it will be given. Feedback will be differentiated so that learners are either directed to errors or areas of strength, or asked to find them themselves so that learners are fully involved in the feedback and improvement process.

SMART Targets across the curriculum

SMART targets are used to help the learner identify what the lesson objective is, but also identify the key skills that they will be learning within the lesson objective, which supports their learning. The targets will be highlighted pink to show if understood, pink and green to show emerging understanding and green to show objective not met. Work will be placed in books so that flow can be continued if a leaner is absent from a lesson. Targets are also highlighted to show if interventions are in process during that lesson or O/T (Off track), to show not absent from school, but reasoning for incomplete work.

The SMART Target will have a written indicator on it to show that the learner completed the work independently or with support. SMART targets have links between what they are learning in the lesson and the progression paths with subject understanding to KS5 courses and career paths. This helps the learner to see the validity in what they are learning and how it impacts and shapes their future.

Monitoring of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

All Teachers are monitored once a term via a lesson observation or learning walk, in line with the schools Performance Management Policy. Lesson Observations are a positive process designed to provide reflective opportunities to improve the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Leaders use lesson observation reflection questions as a guide during lesson

observations. As of Autumn 2023, the school now uses IRIS Connect allowing teachers to video a lesson and add comments afterwards, to improve their delivery and use this as an alternative to a traditional lesson observation which SEMH learners can struggle with.

Learning Walks and 'book looks' (book scrutiny) are led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), staff are informed of their focus in advance. The focus of these is targeted to provide a snapshot of different aspects of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, for example retrieval practice, whole school literacy strategies and help inform SLT of appropriate policy implementation and CPD needs. 'Book looks' are done alongside teachers and/or learners as a way to open purposeful conversation around learning in their classrooms. Learning Walks and 'book looks' are not used to provide individual feedback to teachers.

Staff are also encouraged to be reflective, seeking advice from other members of staff and pupils' voice to evaluate their own practice. Teachers can take part in 'deliberate practice' to improve areas of their teaching and this is welcomed by SLT and can be supported by them if the educators wish for direction/coaching with this.

Pupil progress is tracked termly and all key performance indicator data is shared with stakeholders and governors termly and challenge welcomed.

It is important to point out that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy is not to be used as success criteria to observe lessons. They are to inform teachers of what good practice looks like. However, SLT monitor classrooms, lessons and learners' work to ensure that the strategies within the policy are being implemented.

Teachers are expected to use these strategies as a framework for their teaching whilst not being afraid to take a risk or trying out new ideas/evidence-based practice.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a shared responsibility to embed our Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy across our school. Regular CPD is scheduled throughout the year with a focus on Teaching, Learning and Assessment and ensuring staff are fully up to date with the latest DFE updates and pedagogy. Individual CPD is available to staff that wish to improve areas of their Teaching, Learning and Assessment practice.

Kassia is part of the PRU's Hub network; a network of pupil referral units in the North west where subject specialists meet every term to share good Teaching, Learning and Assessment practice and work together. Kassia also works closely with Arbour Academy (pupil referral unit in Salford, part of Kings Academy Trust) in sharing staff professional development and training around Teaching, Learning and Assessment within Kings Academy Trust.
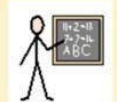
Appendix 1 - Main aims of the Kassia curriculum

Appendix 2 – Foundations

Classroom environment		Setting up a classroom that is welcoming, safe and nurturing. Welcoming learners and allowing them entry in a calm and orderly fashion. Having a tidy, well organised space free of unnecessary distractions. Consistent routines that establish an effective classroom environment
Knowing learners and developing relationships		Developing relationships with learners cannot be under estimated. Getting to know learners well, their needs, strengths and weaknesses and personal circumstances. Familiarisation of the EHCP needs of our learners to increase learners motivation.
High expectations		'The higher the expectations of teachers, the better learners perform' – (Rosenthal & Jacobson). Knowing learners starting points and gaps in knowledge thoroughly. Having the belief that all learners can succeed and communicate this belief to the learners.

Appendix 3 – Teaching Strategies

Welcome		Kassia pupils require a welcome and settling in period to their lessons. This builds trusting relationships between learners and staff and opens communication so that learners feel comfortable asking for support in the lesson.
Retrieval		Based on Rosenshines principles of direct instruction; retrieval tasks focus learners attention onto the knowledge they are required to remember to use within the lesson, or a task and embed knowledge from their working memory into their long term memory. This is also a transition into learning. Having this ready on entry helps students to settle and engage early in the lesson limiting wasted lesson time.
Sharing knowledge/ clear instruction		Using Rosenshines principles of direct instruction through setting clear and specific lesson objectives that all students understand and can work towards achieving. Teachers impart knowledge that learners need to know to access the lesson and understand what is expected of them within the lesson.

* Formative assessment is ongoing, if at any point pupils show that they have a misconception this process will be adapted to meet the needs of the learners.

Chunking		Rosenshine suggests presenting information in small steps 'chunking'. Teachers impart knowledge or give tasks in small, meaningful chunks for pupils to complete. Clear, concise instructions without creating cognitive overload gives pupils the opportunity to feel success within the lesson.
Modelling		Modelling is one of Rosenshines 10 priciples of direct instruction. Modelling takes place 'live' within the lesson in order to show the thought processes, resilience and self–regulation needed to complete an example task. A teacher might teach a pupil a strategy for summarising a paragraph by initially 'thinking aloud' or show the metacognition required to solve a maths problem whilst evidencing how they are drawing upon prior knowledge. Teachers use correct vocabulary and terminologies to aid pupils. The modelled example should be left as a scaffold for pupils to see and use in their own work, therefore practicing the skill before they can complete independently.
Differentiation/sc affolding leading to practice		'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. As Rosenshine suggests teachers initially provide enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently. Differentiated work is given so that pupils of all abilities can access the work and feel success in their learning. This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the pupil's current capabilities.

* Formative assessment is ongoing, if at any point pupils show that they have a misconception this process will be adapted to meet the needs of the learners.
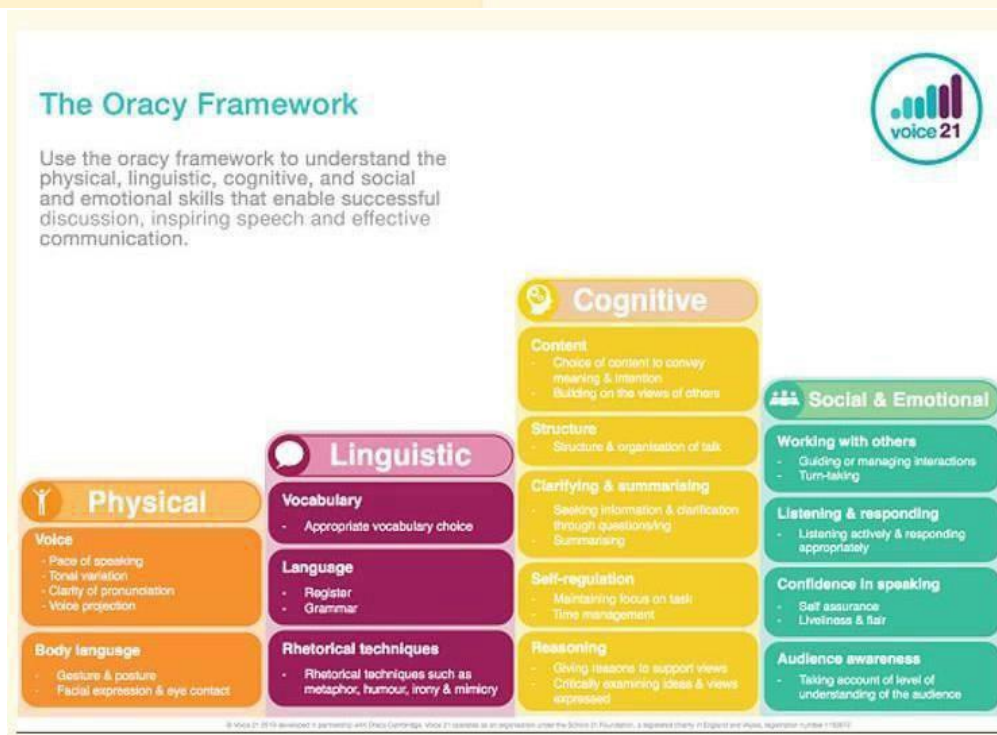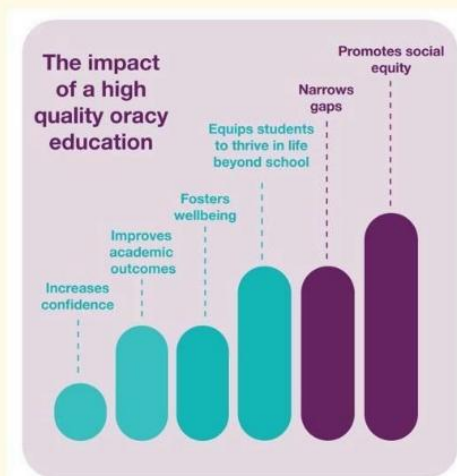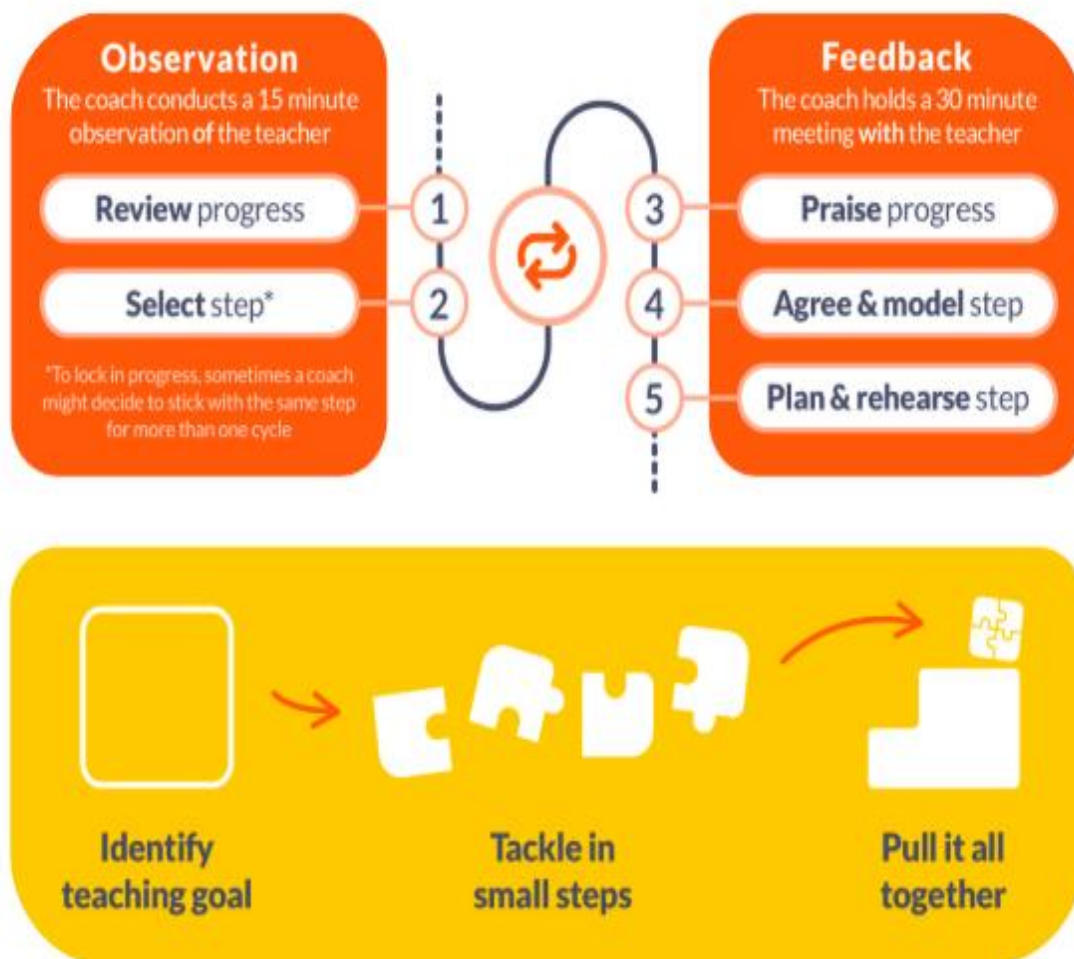
Appendix 4 – Oracy

Children who struggle with language or have poor vocabulary at age five are:

- Six times less likely to reach the expected standard in English at age 11 than children who had good language skills at five.

- Ten times less likely to achieve the expected level in Math's.

- More than twice as likely to be unemployed at age 34 as children with good vocabulary.

- Twice as likely to have mental health difficulties, even after taking account of a range of other factors that might have played a part.

(The Communication Trust, 2017)

The impact of a high quality oracy education

The Oracy Framework

Use the oracy framework to understand the physical, linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional skills that enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication.

Appendix 5 – Steplab and Oracy

Appendix 6 - SMART Targets across the curriculum

29/09/2025

LO: I will develop ability to interpret maps using scale and ratios. (Maths) KS5 Link: sciences/math's

Careers Link: engineer/architect

My SMART targets

- I will match the statements to the ratios
- I will work out the actual distance between locations.
- I will complete tables showing the actual distances between locations

Appendix 7 - Monitoring of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Lesson observations

Assessment data

Focused Learning Walks

Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

Staff reflection

'Book looks'

Deliberate practice