

Principal's Message – week ending 28 02 20

Dear Families

Towards 'The Hinchingbrooke Approach to Teaching'!

Although I am still relatively new to the school, I already have a sense that teaching at Hinchingbrooke is good. That sense comes from looking at students' results (for example, last summer's GCSE results), looking at lessons around the school and talking to my colleagues. However good teaching is in a school, it can always improve and in my experience heads of department and teachers are constantly looking for ways of improving what they do. The school is working on developing what we are calling The Hinchingbrooke Approach to Teaching and I want to explain to you what it means and why we are doing it.

Developing an approach to teaching involves asking these two key questions:

- 1) Do some ways of teaching work better than others? And, if the answer to this question is Yes,
- 2) **What** ways of teaching work better?

I think some ways of teaching, or teaching techniques, definitely do work better than others and I believe few people would argue that everything one might do to teach someone something would be equally effective. The harder job is, obviously, deciding what to do. It becomes The Hinchingbrooke Approach to Teaching (or H.A.T.) when teachers of all subjects **typically** use the same technique(s).

All subjects differ from one other of course – PE is a different subject from English and it will be taught differently as a result. So, for an approach to work, it has to focus on techniques that are common across all subjects – fortunately, we believe that there are quite a few of these common techniques.

Teaching techniques that are common across subjects

A few examples:

- Asking questions of the whole class
- Giving feedback to students about their work in a lesson
- Reviewing what students have learned during a lesson
- Quizzing

To go back to PE and English, teachers of both of those subjects WILL typically use the 4 techniques listed above, and this is where the H.A.T. comes in: we want everyone to be questioning, giving feedback, reviewing learning and quizzing in the most effective ways possible, informed by evidence of what works best.

Why are we doing it?

Our main aim in school is to bring about learning, by which we mean a long-term change in memory. For something to have been truly learned, it needs to be possible to retrieve it from memory and use it when you need it. If Year 7s are learning about 'Erosion' in Geography, they need to be able to use that 'learning' later, including crucially when they get to Year 11 – that's true

learning. We are developing The Hinchbrooke approach to Teaching, therefore, because we believe it will result in better teaching over time at the school and, logically, better learning.

This is still a work in progress, of course, but we believe it is important work for the school to do.

Kind regards

Mark Patterson
Principal