

Parental Information Leaflet

Cooperative Learning

At Homefield Church of England Primary School, we have taken on a new approach to learning – this is called Cooperative Learning. This guide will explain some of the features of Cooperative Learning, its benefits and what it can and can't do.

What is Cooperative Learning?

Cooperative Learning is an approach to teaching. Knowledge and skills are modelled by the teacher and then learners are able to practise these skills in a series of structured activities. These structured activities are called CLIPS. CLIP means Cooperative Learning Interactive Pattern. Each CLIP is designed to encourage certain elements of listening, speaking, questioning and response. The teacher will use the CLIP they feel best supports the learning of the groups of learners in their class. Cooperative learning is very interactive with pupils moving around the class. Speaking to each other and answering questions.

What are the CLIPS?

CLIPS are content free – this means they can be used in any subject. At present there are around three CLIPS that are used in classes, primarily in Maths and in the Junior classes, to help learning. These are:

Catch 1 Partner, Meet in the Middle and Boss and Secretary

Catch 1 Partner – Each child has a question on a card. They approach a partner and say “Excuse me, can I ask you a question please?” The other child answers them. They repeat and then swap cards. Usually this activity is used as a starter to remind children where by the teacher models something or refers back to something taught before. However, like all the CLIPS, they can be used at any time and in any situation.

Meet in the Middle - Children work in groups of four with all pupils facing each other. Each group has an A3 piece of paper with a single question/problem facing both pairs in the group. Each corner of the page houses an empty space for a reasoning response from each child. Children face each other and write a reasoning response to the question on the page in their corresponding corner of the paper. Each child then shares their response with the group in turn. This reasoning response is then written into their books next to an “R” in a circle as a record of their reasoning skill.

Boss and Secretary – This allows for procedures to be practised in any subject. After teacher modelling one child is “The Boss” and explains, without writing, how to solve a problem to the other child (Secretary) who writes down everything they say in the procedure. The secretary can ask questions to check but it is not always necessary. They then swap.

What does a Cooperative Learning Classroom look like?

As far as possible your children will work in groups of four. Sometimes an adult may make up the fourth person if there is an odd number. These groups can be in ability groups or mixed

ability depending on how the teacher wishes to differentiate. These groups are not set in stone and children will find themselves working alongside a variety of people in their class. This encourages and installs respect and positive behaviours for learning.

Will the children still work independently?

Yes. A “typical” lesson may look like this:

Teacher Models then uses a CLIP to practise. Then the teacher will model the next step or focus of the lesson followed by another CLIP. After that the children will show what they know independently. This work is then marked in the book and tracked as evidence to show your child’s progress. Cooperative Learning gives confidence, practise and support to a child before they start.

How does Cooperative Learning help?

Cooperative Learning is a way of ensuring that children develop communication skills and an acknowledgment that working together is an effective way of building skills vital for work and thought in the future. Also, it helps to build confidence before independent work is undertaken. Furthermore, Cooperative Learning encourages deeper thinking and critical thinking skills, as the follow up questions we usually ask are: How? and Why?

Is Cooperative Learning being used in any other schools?

Many schools have parts of cooperative learning as part of their teaching. A recent report from the Sutton Trust noted that Cooperative Learning was very effective at improving pupils’ progress. However, schools in England do not use it as much, yet in Scandinavian countries Cooperative Learning is much more widely used.

How can parents help?

Parents can help in the same way as usual; reading regularly with their child, practising their times tables with them, listening and talking and encouraging their child to explain their answers. Parents may even wish to ask which CLIPS their child has been using that day in class.

Learning will still require children to work hard, listen and concentrate on tasks. However, cooperative learning can help to boost engagement, understanding, teamwork and attainment.

If there are any further questions please talk to the class teachers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this pamphlet.