

# T3

THE TUDOR TEACHER

SPRING 2025



TUDOR  
HALL







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Introduction

It gives me enormous pleasure to introduce this new edition of T3 The Tudor Teacher.



At Tudor Hall we recognise the importance of having faith in our girls that they all can achieve the best possible academic outcomes. It is this belief that drew us into a very natural partnership with the High Performance Learning (HPL) network of schools. This prestigious research-led programme recognises the world's leading schools at the forefront of contemporary learning science. We are embarking on this programme because it feels like the logical next step for the way in which we approach teaching and learning at Tudor. It is not a change in ethos nor direction, rather it is a framework to enhance outcomes for all the girls by providing an aspirational set of values, attitudes and attributes. HPL's holistic, rather than elitist, approach is rooted in the belief that everyone, regardless of their starting point, can achieve the highest academic standards, resonates strongly with our values of encouraging all the girls to aim high. The HPL framework sees personal and pastoral support and guidance as crucial to academic success. Its approach will enable the girls to enhance and build on their own ability to use it productively to obtain good academic results whilst developing essential life-skills. We believe it will bring together everything we need to ensure the girls are intellectually and socially confident, as well as being university-ready, workplace-ready and life-ready with a global outlook and a concern for others. The principles of HPL place the pupil at the centre of the framework, help to instil characteristics, attitudes, a love of learning as well as helping to equip the girls with the tools to manage the pressure of public examinations.

Within this second edition you will read the work of colleagues who are engaging with the High Performance Learning philosophy and other new developments in education. Their work will help shape our provision going forward and ensure all the girls' make exceptional academic progress. Head of Sixth Form and Mathematics Teacher, Vikki Marsh, reflects on the progress of the Teaching and Learning Group this academic year, highlighting key achievements in Tudor Hall's HPL journey. Geography Teacher, Louise Harper, emphasises the value of sharing good practice through positive peer observations, while Classics Teacher, Julia Thorn, offers insights in her article, 'I don't know... and that's okay', sharing how this empowering mantra has influenced her teaching approach. Head of Mathematics, Jonitha Peterpillai, shares her innovative journey in integrating OneNote as a teaching tool, striving to teach mathematics entirely paper-free. Deputy Head of Learning Support and History Teacher, Bev Murphy, provides valuable insights into supporting students with dyslexia, drawing on her extensive expertise. Our pupils' academic voice remains central at Tudor Hall, with this edition featuring Casey and Elsie reflecting on the most impactful elements of school life and the experiences that have shaped their learning journeys.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank these individuals — colleagues and pupils — for their time, effort, hard work and good humour which does so much to positively shape our school. They are further proof that our school motto, *habeo ut dem*, 'I have that I may give' infuses life in our community. I must also thank Professor Deborah Eyre and her superb High Performance Learning team for their support on our path to World Class School accreditation. Special thanks too to the editorial team for pulling all these articles together. The next edition of The Tudor Teacher will be published in the Summer Term, 2025. A call for articles will be announced soon but if you have an idea and would like to contribute, please do not hesitate to get in touch with any member of the Teaching and Learning Group.

Simon Smith, Deputy Head (Academic)



# Reflections: The journey so far...

As I reflect on the progress of the Teaching and Learning Group since the publication of our first edition of *The Tudor Teacher*, I am once again struck by the remarkable strides we have made in such a short time. This dynamic and dedicated group of passionate teachers has become a driving force in enhancing pedagogical practices at Tudor Hall. Committed to developing their own teaching while generously sharing their expertise, the group brings together staff from all departments, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

The Teaching and Learning Group meets at least once per half term, and these meetings serve as more than just professional development opportunities; they are a forum for discussion and collaboration. By drawing on research-informed practice, we ensure that our work is grounded in the latest educational research, keeping our teaching methods effective and relevant. The

group also plays a vital role in informing school policy, ensuring that decisions made at Tudor Hall are shaped by evidence-based practices that benefit our students. Discussions have been engaging and wide-ranging, covering topics such as *The Strengths and Considerations when Teaching in an All-Girls School* and *Tudor Hall's Journey Towards Becoming a World Class School*.



The heart of every meeting is the 'showcase', a powerful initiative where a member of staff shares an aspect of their teaching practice with the group. These showcases provide an invaluable opportunity for staff to learn from one another, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice and have quickly become my favourite part of our meetings together. Whether it's a new teaching technique, an innovative classroom strategy, or a research-informed approach, these showcases highlight the diversity of talent within the school and ensure that best practices are shared across departments. Inspired by colleagues such as James Wakeley and Jonitha Peterpillai, Zoë Simms offered an insightful presentation on her journey using OneNote as a teaching and learning tool in RS, illustrating its transformative potential. Bev Murphy shared her expertise on dyslexia, a session she expands upon in her must-read article in this edition. Kathryn Joel led a compelling workshop on 'Multilingualism as an Asset', exploring how language diversity enriches the classroom. James Woodward's use of colour-coding in KS5 assessments provided practical strategies to enhance clarity and feedback for students. Lindsey Cullen also demonstrated how she uses colour in her Classics lessons to highlight grammatical structures, helping her students recall and understand key Latin vocabulary. These are just some of the showcases that have not only inspired colleagues but also directly informed classroom practice, further embedding research-informed teaching across the school.

I am delighted to officially announce that I will be passing on the baton of Teaching and Learning Group Coordinator to Louise Harper and James Woodward. Both Louise and James have been dedicated, long-standing members of the group since its inception, consistently contributing their expertise and insights to our showcases and publications. Their passion for fostering collaborative learning and driving pedagogical innovation ensures that the group will continue to thrive under their leadership.

One of Louise and James' first initiatives was organising the highly successful Teaching and Learning Carousel during INSET. This mini conference featured six dynamic presentations and workshops, including *Developing Your Use of OneNote*, *HPL Showcase*, *EAL: Sharing Best Practice*, *Learning Support Strategies in the Classroom*, *iSAMs: Tips and Tricks*, and *DO NOW: A Powerful Start of Lesson Routine*. The event was not only incredibly well-organised but also inspiring, creating an enthusiastic buzz in the Teaching Centre! Colleagues left energised and equipped with fresh ideas, setting a positive and motivating tone for the term ahead.



As the group continues to grow and evolve, it remains steadfast in its mission to enhance teaching standards, support professional development, and ensure that every student benefits from the highest quality education. Louise Harper encapsulates this sentiment perfectly in her article, *Collaborative classrooms: Peer observation as a tool for learning*, where she reflects that "teaching can sometimes feel like a lonely profession." It is precisely the support and camaraderie of groups like ours that transform that sense of isolation into a shared journey of growth and excellence. Through ongoing collaboration, reflection, and a commitment to innovation, the Teaching and Learning Group will remain a cornerstone of Tudor Hall's academic success.

**Vikki Marsh, Head of Sixth Form**

# Student Perspectives

**Casey (LVI) reflects on how she has fully embraced the school motto *habeo ut dem*, ‘I have, that I may give’ through extensive volunteering opportunities in the Sixth Form.**

Coming into life in the Sixth Form at Tudor Hall has really given me so many priceless opportunities that I couldn’t turn down, from helping out the local community but also going even further and helping children in South Africa.

On a Thursday afternoon I volunteer in a local primary school, Queensway. The reason I chose this school was because I used to go there when I was younger, and I wanted to lend a helping hand whilst also wanting to experience how much it has changed and developed since my years there. I help in Year 5, helping the children to read and enjoy some active learning with them. I also love seeing how much they enjoy reading and get intrigued by their individual learning. Listening and observing these young children opens my mind and takes me back to when I was their age. I get to experience an awards assembly every Thursday afternoon and it is so great to watch the children achieve so many great things. I believe it is very important to show children they should be proud of working hard as that will then pay off in later years when they get to the level of studying that I am doing.

In the October half term, Tudor gave me the most life-changing experience of being able to travel over to South Africa, Johannesburg and volunteer in a school of disadvantaged and underprivileged children, Sparrow School. I went to this school with no idea of what I was about to see. I had a rough plan in my head of how the country was a lot more different to the UK but I really did have no idea just how eye opening this trip was going to be. Travelling from the airport to the hotel was heartbreaking and gave me a sense of what poverty really is. From seeing this so early into my trip, I was determined to go into the school and change their lives as much as possible in a week. I arrived at the school and was blown away with the welcomes and the loving smiles these children gave. Their individual eyes all lit up as soon as we all walked through the gate and this gave my heart an ache because it suggested to me that it was very rare for them to see people like us, volunteers.

From this trip I gained confidence for myself and a certain understanding of how I deal with different situations. The approach I took when in South Africa I feel was a positive and life-changing approach. Most of the children I was working with had a disability and were brought up in horrible backgrounds. Some were abused, starved and mentally unstable - but they had the purest smiles. For me, as I mentioned earlier on, this has changed my entire life: left, right and centre. Everything about it from the laughs, to the hugs, to the cards and even love letters, it’s taught me to look at life in a different way.

I am so privileged to have what I have in my life, and it’s made me open my eyes to the horrible life others have to live. This experience is something I will forever remember, and I am adamant to make every single difference I can to ensure these children keep their precious little smiles on their faces. If I can give any advice to anyone it would be to always keep in mind that some small children like them in South Africa experience abuse every day and some don’t even get fed. I encourage everyone to be grateful for even a glass of water because the sights I saw, are sights that have forever changed my perspective. Volunteering is the best, most life-changing thing ever and I will encourage everyone of all ages to do this.

As well as helping out at Sparrow School, this trip also widened my knowledge on travelling and gave me an opportunity to see other parts of the world. I experienced a different culture and even got to go on a safari which is purely a bucket list thing. The bonds and love shared on this trip is something I will always remember. To apply my experience into my everyday life, I can’t express enough how different I am now to what I was before the trip. It has widened my knowledge, my perspective but also my heart for those precious children. Fundraising is something that I will continue to do and encourage anyone to think of others who may not have what you do which reflects the school motto - I have that I may give.

These experiences have an effect on my academic life because it encourages me to be grateful for the resources and teachers I have literally at my doorstep. It motivates me more to achieve my goal and be grateful that I have the opportunity to have an education. It also changed my opinion on what I want to do in my life going forward and a gap year is definitely on the list.

Volunteering really widens my view of life, and I will be doing something like this in my gap year.

**Elsie (LVI) shares her inspiring journey of exploring the super-curriculum at Tudor Hall. In her article, she reflects on how resources, teacher recommendations, and enriching activities such as academic competitions have deepened her subject knowledge and nurtured her love of learning.**

Despite being early on in the process, I have already had an incredibly positive experience with super-curriculum at Tudor. Finding super-curricular resources — such as books, podcasts, articles and videos — has been made a lot easier as a result of the support and guidance I have received. For example, I found the resources on Firefly a wonderful starting place when beginning wider reading — leading me to some fascinating books, such as ‘Professor Stewart’s incredible numbers’ by Ian Stewart. I have also received some wonderful recommendations for wider reading and podcasts directly from teachers — such as ‘longitude’ by Dava Sobel and ‘the secrets of mathematics’ (a podcast by the University of Oxford). One episode that particularly interested me was an episode on Singularities, featuring Roger Penrose, which focused on the mathematical tools that allowed for the discovery of black holes. All of these have really helped to contribute to my interest and enthusiasm for my subjects.

I would say that, in particular, over the past few months, super-curricular has enriched my learning in many ways. Not only by boosting my interest in my subjects and allowing me to explore areas of interest, outside of lessons, that I may not have been able to otherwise. But also, by improving skills necessary for my subjects, such as my analytical and problem-solving skills. An example of a super-curricular activity that helped with this was the ‘Maths Olympiad for Girls’ which was a wonderful opportunity that helped me to improve these skills as it involved questions that were very different from those I had seen before (e.g. in my GCSEs), and were therefore necessary to approach in a very different way. Another competition that I have participated in that was an invaluable experience was, the UKMT maths challenge — which, since the Lower School, has helped me to think about problems from a different perspective and improve my critical thinking skills.

Ultimately, the super-curriculum has already had an overwhelmingly positive effect on my experience of Sixth Form at Tudor. It has allowed me to learn more about my subjects, continuing to increase my interest and engagement, as well as improving my understanding of my subjects.





Geography Teacher and Head of Tudor House, Louise Harper, explores the transformative power of peer observation. She highlights how positive, collaborative practices not only enhance professional growth but also foster a culture of shared excellence within the classroom. Louise's insights underline the importance of learning from one another to continually refine and elevate the teaching experience at Tudor Hall.

## Collaborative classrooms: Peer observation as a tool for learning

Teaching can sometimes feel like a lonely profession. The students that we teach are incredible; engaging, challenging and enthusing. However, despite standing up in front of a room full of people all day every day, we work primarily on our own.



In every school there is extraordinary teaching and learning taking place in every classroom, but too often this is behind a closed door, meaning that benefits cannot be shared. Lack of collaboration with colleagues is a missed opportunity for professional development and for helping to diminish pedagogical solitude in the teaching profession (Lomas and Nicholls, 2005).

### What is peer observation?

Peer observation is the process whereby an observer watches a colleague in their practice, with the main aim of learning about teaching strategies through the observational experience (Hendy et al, 2020). The emphasis is switched from 'being observed' to 'being the observer', where the responsibility lies with the observer to learn from the teaching. The aim is to enable teachers to learn from one another, to develop a more reflective approach and to identify and discuss opportunities for development. As Engin and Priest (2014; p3) write 'observing another teacher stimulates reflection of our teaching and can be a powerful catalyst for development and change. Since the focus is observing teaching rather than the teacher, there is no judgement making or evaluative feedback'.

### How can peer observation benefit teaching and learning?

Hendy and Oliver (2012, p1) suggest that 'evidence is increasingly emerging that watching a colleague teach can be just as beneficial as, if not more than, receiving

feedback'. Peer observation promotes collegiality and a scholarly approach to teaching by allowing for reflection on different approaches and how they may be transferred into our own classrooms. Unlike 'traditional' observations that are usually associated with some form of performance management, peer observation shifts the focus and helps to develop confidence, create a supportive and collaborative environment across a school (Bell and Mladenovic, 2015). Perhaps most importantly, it raises awareness of student learning experiences, which is something that we are often (ironically) quite removed from as teachers.

### What are the challenges?

Despite numerous reported benefits, Sachs and Parsall (2014) claim that peer review is 'neither systematically supported nor generally perceived to be a high-quality developmental activity' (p2). For many, the term 'observation' invokes memories of clipboards and ratings and an anxiety inducing association with inspection. Observation can also be viewed as a threat to teacher autonomy and there is often little incentive for staff to participate (Torres et al, 2017). Logistics can also present a problem. It is no secret that term time is busy and even with the best of intentions, opportunities for continuing professional development can often slip quickly down the to-do list.

### What are the aims for collaborative classrooms at Tudor?

Our discussions in the Teaching and Learning Group have centred around the desire to shift the narrative and see observation as a 'quality enhancement tool, rather than a quality assurance mechanism' (Lomas and Nicholls, 2005). Disassociating any form of observation from ideas of performance management — peer or otherwise — does bring challenges but providing staff are willing to engage, it is possible to create an 'open door policy' where school culture means that colleagues feel comfortable dropping into lessons and having colleagues drop in to theirs. Changes to the appraisal process over the last year have meant that all colleagues have had the opportunity to visit at least one lesson outside of their subject area, which has certainly helped. Over the 2024-25 academic year we hope to make further progress to show just how significant non-judgmental peer observation can be as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

*"Our discussions in the Teaching and Learning Group have centred around the desire to shift the narrative and see observation as a 'quality enhancement tool, rather than a quality assurance mechanism'"*



*"In every school there is extraordinary teaching and learning taking place in every classroom, but too often this is behind a closed door, meaning that benefits cannot be shared."*

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The Autumn Term marked the start of our exciting journey to becoming a World Class School through High Performance Learning. Vikki Marsh, Head of Sixth Form, shares what this transformative approach means for Tudor Hall School and the strides we have already made.

# High Performance Learning



At Tudor Hall School, we have always aspired to provide an exceptional education that equips our students for success in an ever-changing world. This year, we embarked on a transformative journey with High Performance Learning (HPL), leading to accreditation as a World Class School within two years. By embedding the HPL philosophy into every aspect of our teaching and learning, we are fostering an environment where every student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

## What is High Performance Learning?

High Performance Learning is an evidence-based framework developed by Professor Deborah Eyre. It is built on the principle that high performance is not an innate ability reserved for a select few but can be nurtured in all students. HPL focuses on developing two key dimensions:

- **Values, Attitudes, and Attributes (VAAs):** These include qualities such as resilience, perseverance, and a love of learning, which contribute to students' personal and academic growth.
- **Advanced Cognitive Performance characteristics (ACPs):** These are higher-order thinking skills, such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, and creative reasoning, that are essential for tackling complex challenges.

By integrating these qualities and skills, called the Key Competencies, into our curriculum, we aim to help every student become a confident, independent, and lifelong learner.



Figure 1: The Key Competencies to be developed in HPL

Central to the success of the HPL framework are its seven support pillars, which collectively foster a climate for success. These pillars not only enhance the professionalism of classroom teachers but also guide whole-school strategies to optimise learning opportunities, provide tailored support, and inspire personal motivation. The key competencies (the VAAs and the ACPs) form the base on which all the pillars stand.

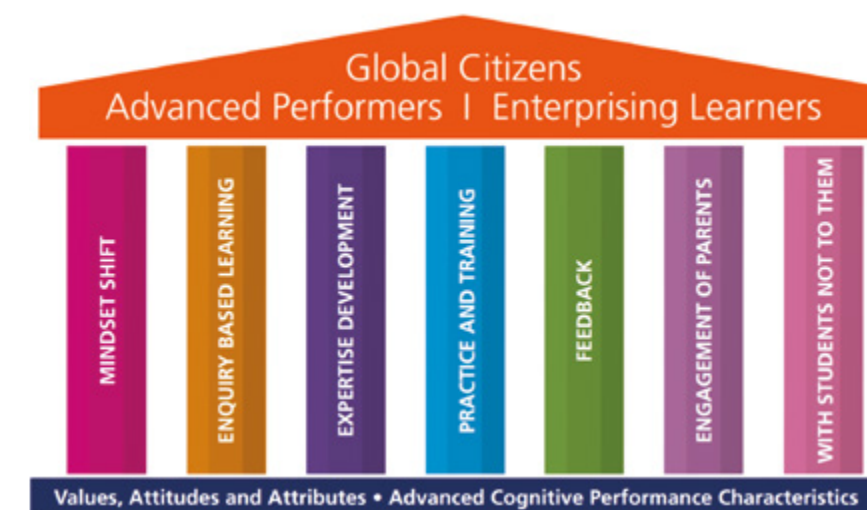


Figure 2: The 7 Pillars of High Performance Learning<sup>1</sup>

## Why High Performance Learning?

The concept of a mindset shift, a cornerstone of HPL, aligns closely with Tudor Hall's Aim Higher philosophy. Both emphasise perseverance, resilience, and the belief that performance can develop with effort and the right strategies. This mindset reflects a shift away from viewing ability as fixed by genetics, recognising instead that the brain is capable of growth and change, enabling every student to achieve their full potential. In the HPL framework, the focus shifts from measuring ability to assessing performance. Instead of relying solely on innate talent, the emphasis is on how students engage with their learning, the effort they invest, and their ability to develop and apply skills over time. This approach encourages a growth mindset, empowering students to take ownership of their progress, learn from mistakes, and continuously improve. By valuing performance over ability, HPL fosters a culture where persistence, resilience, and a commitment to learning are celebrated, ultimately helping students achieve their fullest potential.

The HPL framework is also underpinned by the belief that the brain is far more plastic than previously understood, with the capacity for continuous growth and development. Scientific research on neuroplasticity,

*“There is a clear growing momentum within the school, with middle leaders actively embracing the HPL philosophy. It is particularly encouraging to see that students are beginning to experience the benefits of HPL, which speaks to the effectiveness of the implementation so far.”*

such as the work of Dr. Norman Doidge in *The Brain That Changes Itself*<sup>2</sup>, has shown that the brain can reorganise itself by forming new neural connections in response to learning and experience. Recent findings in neurobiology further support the idea that the brain remains adaptable throughout life<sup>3</sup>. This understanding encourages students to embrace challenges, knowing that through persistence and effort, they can rewire their brains and enhance their cognitive abilities. By emphasising neuroplasticity, HPL promotes a growth mindset where effort, learning, and resilience are fundamental to success.

*“I found learning about study techniques, such as the ‘Pomodoro Method’ really helpful! You put all your attention into your work for 20 minutes and then take a short break. It has been proven to be a really effective way to learn!”*

Marisa, IVs



# Developing a High Performance culture

Our students thrive in a positive, collaborative environment where curiosity, confidence, and resilience are nurtured through relationships built on care, respect, and kindness — key values of the Tudor Hall community.

Teachers and students work together in a culture of high expectations, ensuring that every minute of every lesson is purposeful and impactful. Lessons are dynamic and engaging, with a strong sense of pace. Students are encouraged to take risks in their learning, embrace mistakes as valuable steps in the process, and celebrate both their efforts and achievements.

To lay the groundwork for our HPL accreditation, we have begun implementing several key initiatives:

- **Classroom vocabulary integration**  
Across all subjects, teachers at Tudor Hall are weaving the VAAs and ACPs into their daily lessons. For example, terms like ‘resilience’, ‘critical thinking’, and ‘metacognition’ are becoming part of the shared language in classrooms, helping students to recognise and develop these skills in themselves and others. This consistent vocabulary supports students in understanding how these attributes and skills underpin their learning and success.
- **Reporting criteria**  
Our reporting system now reflects the principles of HPL by explicitly assessing students’ progress in developing VAAs and ACPs. This approach ensures that students, parents, and teachers can track not only academic achievements but also the broader skills and qualities that contribute to high performance.
- **Dedicated HPL lessons**  
For our IVs, Mr Smith has been leading dedicated HPL lessons, providing students with structured opportunities to explore and practice the HPL framework in depth. These sessions emphasise the application of ACPs to real-world problems and foster the VAAs needed for academic and personal success.
- **T6 mindset sessions**  
Our LVI students are being introduced to HPL through their Monday morning T6 Mindset sessions. These sessions focus on cultivating a growth mindset, encouraging students to embrace challenges, learn from setbacks, and build the confidence to excel. This initiative ensures that

HPL principles are embedded early in their post-16 journey, preparing them for further education and beyond.

- **Adopting HPL in boarding houses**  
House staff have also begun embracing the principles of HPL, ensuring the framework extends beyond the classroom. Notably, Ashtons House has incorporated HPL language into displays and workspaces throughout the boarding house, creating an environment that reinforces the values and attitudes central to the HPL philosophy.



Figure 3: The Ashton's 'Brain Board' that will focus on different VAAs and ACPs

- **HPL online**  
All staff have access to a dedicated High Performance Learning online platform, which offers a wealth of professional development resources, including webinars, presentations, guides, and lesson challenges. The platform also features a library of exemplar materials from World Class Schools, as well as a collection of courses and videos designed to support Tudor Hall staff at both the classroom and whole-school levels. We receive regular e-shots from HPL that provide updates and highlight key resources, as well as inspiration.
- **Sharing good practice**  
The Teaching and Learning Group have been instrumental in driving the principles of HPL in classrooms across the school. Members of the group regularly showcase best practice, with our Head of Modern Foreign Languages, Holly Thomas, just recently leading an “HPL in Practice” workshop during INSET.

# Involving the wider Tudor community

At Tudor Hall, we recognise that while our school provides the formal context for learning, families are the most significant influences in their daughter's life. Research consistently shows that parental engagement profoundly impacts a student's academic success, with progress rates increasing by up to 15% when parents show strong interest in their child's education<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, parental involvement between the ages of 7 and 16 has been found to be more influential than factors such as family background or parental education level.

By continuing to strengthen the already positive relationships between school and home, we aim to create a unified support system for our students. When parents actively promote learning and collaborate with teachers, they help to establish a nurturing environment where students feel encouraged to achieve and engage positively with peers. At Tudor Hall, we are committed to maximising these partnerships, ensuring that families are actively involved in decisions affecting their children's learning journey.

Simon Smith, Deputy Head (Academic), has already delivered webinars for parents, introducing families to the principles of HPL, outlining our roadmap towards accreditation, and sharing ways they can support their daughters' progress in all areas of school life. Our collective efforts not only enhance individual outcomes but also strengthen our wider school community, in alignment with the principles of High Performance

Learning. By working together, we ensure every student is supported on their journey to reach their full potential.

# Looking ahead

Our first report from HPL on Tudor Hall's progress towards accreditation has just been published and highlights several positive developments. There is a clear growing momentum within the school, with middle leaders actively embracing the HPL philosophy. It is particularly encouraging to see that students are beginning to experience the benefits of HPL, which speaks to the effectiveness of the implementation so far. Additionally, the efforts to keep parents informed and engaged in the HPL journey reflect a strong commitment to ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned and invested in the school's continued growth. As we continue on this exciting journey, we remain committed to integrating HPL principles throughout the Tudor Hall School community. Over the next two years, we will deepen our understanding of the framework, refine our practices, and celebrate milestones along the way.

Achieving accreditation as a World Class School will be a testament to our shared belief in the potential of every student and our dedication to realising it. By fostering a culture of high performance, we are not just preparing students for exams but equipping them with the skills, attitudes, and attributes to thrive in life. At Tudor Hall, all students will be deliberately taught ‘how to behave’ as learners, equipping them with the skills and mindset needed for academic and personal success. Together, we are shaping a future where excellence is not just an aspiration but an expectation.


Lesson 1: "meta-cognition"

An example

- Niamh is good at hockey, she is in the school play, she reads a lot, she likes playing the violin and singing along to songs. She is quite good at Maths

But


- Niamh finds it hard to learn French vocab, she struggles to remember dates in History, she forgets her pencil case, doesn't like to ask the teacher questions and struggles to work in Prep on an evening



Example of HPL lessons

Lesson 1: "meta-cognition"

- What advice would you give Niamh?
- Now consider how could one of your "strengths" help with one of the things you find harder?
- What lessons might YOU learn when you succeed, improve, solve a problem. How could you apply them to other problems?
- How could you remember these solutions and strategies?



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2. Doidge, N. (2008) *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*. Penguin.  
3. Lifelong Learning and the Plastic Brain <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/lifelong-learning-and-the-plastic-brain>  
4. Topor et al (2010) *Parental Involvement and Student Academic Performance: A Multiple Mediation Analysis*. Journal of Prevention and Intervention Community. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3020099/pdf/nihms-262106.pdf>Bottom



Classics Teacher, Julia Thorn, reflects on how embracing uncertainty has transformed her teaching practice, encouraging both teachers and students to see the value in curiosity, exploration, and the learning process itself. Julia's insights offer a refreshing perspective on how admitting uncertainty can lead to greater intellectual growth and resilience.

## I don't know... and that's okay

When I started teaching, I could not believe that I was actually being paid to spend every day talking about the ancient languages and texts that I loved. Twenty-three years later, I am very grateful still to have a salary, and the girls at Tudor Hall have enriched my enjoyment and understanding of my subject as much as I hope to have done for them. Two decades ago, I think I would have said

that the purpose of education was to find out, to know. In fact, something my own English teacher used to say to me became my mantra with classes from Year 7 to UVI: there's nothing wrong with not knowing, but there's something wrong with not finding out. This is particularly useful when classes mistake me for a walking dictionary when they don't know a Latin word!



However, at this point in my career, I would say that the purpose of education is rather to realise that you do not know, you cannot know, you will never know; you merely make educated guesses. Socrates, of course, said much the same thing<sup>1</sup>, although, having been permanently damaged by reading Plato's *Apologia* in Greek at university, I tend not to take direct advice from him. The marvellous Cicero, orator, lawyer, philosopher, Mark Antony annoyer, puts it in much the same way at Ac.1.16: "ipse se nihil scire id unum sciat" (he knows that the one thing he knows is nothing).

The importance seems to be, not that one knows nothing, but that one knows that they know nothing. Those who think they know something are less wise than those who know they know nothing. I tend to have this exact same thought when watching Hollywood attempt to recreate the ancient world (Patroclus as Achilles' very definitely heterosexual young 'cousin', anyone?).

This doesn't seem at first glance to be particularly useful to secondary school teachers in the UK in 2024. After all, results would go down rather dramatically if sixth formers were to answer all their A-level papers with a variation on Socrates' or Cicero's sentiment. The recent push for a return to fact-based exam syllabi also flies in the face of the ancient wisdom. However, viewing the learning experience as moving from little knowledge, to more knowledge, to quite a lot of knowledge, to the knowledge that there is more to know than there will ever be time for, can be a valuable tool for teachers and students.

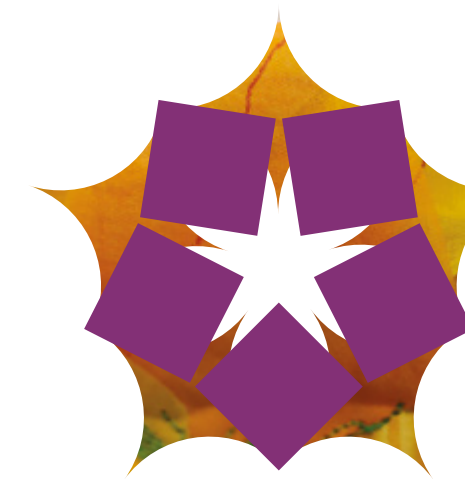
There is a useful example from Classics, which is the often-quoted fact that Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In our Year 9 classical studies syllabus, this is what we teach the girls, before launching into the basics of the Trojan War. At GCSE, when study of Vergil's *Aeneid* requires context, we explain that the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were not written at all; they were composed orally and only written down several hundred years later. At A level we blow the idea of Homer apart completely. In fact, I like to talk about 'Homer' in class (with air quotes) because we do not know if one single poet composed both poems, or even all of each epic. There is no evidence that even if there were such a person he was called Homer, or that he was a he and not a she. So when we say Homer wrote the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, we are wrong on many counts; it is only at a higher level of study that students learn that everything they thought they knew about Homer is in fact incorrect. They know more than the question setters for University Challenge<sup>2</sup>, because they know that they do not know.

Several years ago, in a LVI Classical Civilisation class, we were reading Homer's *Iliad*, and came across the lines: "Fleet-footed Iris departed, while Achilles, beloved of Zeus, rose to his feet. Athene flung her tasselled aegis over his broad shoulders, shed a bright golden mist about his head, and made a fiery glare blaze from the man." (*Iliad* 18.204-5). I got the question I usually field at this point: 'What is an aegis?' And of course, she may well have asked such a thing.

The answer is simple: We don't know. Classicists in their hundreds have spilt more ink than the water of the river Skamander that Achilles fights in *Iliad* 21 in trying to answer such a question. The problem is that Homer is so archaic



*"Viewing the learning experience as moving from little knowledge, to more knowledge, to quite a lot of knowledge, to the knowledge that there is more to know than there will ever be time for, can be a valuable tool for teachers and students."*





even by the time of Classical Greece, that some words he uses are lost<sup>3</sup>. From context we can make sensible guesses, but these are not consistent. I was comfortable giving that very answer at the time, and whenever I have done so in the past, there have been sage nods, and on we go.

This time, however, the student looked at me as though I had said something very silly and came back with, “Well, have you checked on Google?”

The idea that *we do not know something and there is no way to find it out* was obviously a new one to this student, and I admit, this hit me forcefully at the time, and has informed my teaching ever since. If we cannot ever know for sure, why bother even trying? The internet is full of inspiring pictures of sunsets with the advice: It is better to try and fail than not to try at all. If all of the classicists of the past who came across Homer’s aegis had simply footnoted the word with something like ‘unknown’, or ‘haven’t the foggiest’, that would be that. We wouldn’t have any information about uses of the world elsewhere in Homer, or indeed in any other text. With the explosion of comparative philology as a discipline within Classics in the C19th, the etymology of aegis has been thoroughly explored, giving us morsels of meaning to feed into our understanding of the term<sup>4</sup>.

If scholars had been content with ‘I don’t know’, I wouldn’t now be able to answer the sixth former’s question with some confidence that the aegis was probably a cloak or shield, fringed and decorated with the head of the Gorgon. There are of course zero marks available on the exam paper for explaining exactly what an aegis is; the marks are for an understanding of what the aegis does and who uses it.

The freedom that comes with understanding that we do not know is glorious, and I am very pleased that this is employed to full effect in Classics at A-level (and to a certain extent at GCSE). Yes, you need to learn vocabulary and grammar, and be able to read what the ancient author has written, but as far as interpretation goes, anything sensible should be welcomed, celebrated even. The greatest literature in any language should

not be easily understood; rather, meaning can be felt without precise understanding<sup>5</sup>. The famous line in the Aeneid at 1. 462, “sunt lacrimae rerum”, literally means ‘there are tears of things’; but its ‘real’ meaning cannot be pinned down so easily. Any of the following are acceptable translations:

- Everything is so awful it makes me cry all the time
- Things are rough but we have to get through
- The past has been terrible, but better things are coming
- People pity our misfortune
- Others’ pity can cleanse and heal us

The poetry comes from the differences in interpretation. In an UVI Class Civ lesson today, a discussion of this very idea led to a student commenting in exasperation, “Why can’t we have a time machine so we can go back and ask Vergil what he really meant?” My reply was that Vergil’s answer would probably make our interpretation less rich and interesting. However, being the literary genius he most certainly was, Vergil’s answer would surely be, “I don’t know. And I know that I don’t know.”



1 “Εν οἷδα ὅτι οὐδὲν οἷδα — I know that I know nothing

2 I have heard both “What is the name of the epic poet who wrote the Iliad?” and the equally heinous “When did Homer compose the Iliad?” The best Classicists of their generation have not yet come to a consensus on that one, although around 770 BC appears most likely.

3 Note that I fall back into using ‘Homer’ and ‘he’ as shorthand for the bigger picture explained above.

4 For those interested, it probably comes from PIE \*h2eyg- ‘goat’ because it (whatever it was!) was made from goatskin.

5 W R Johnson tells us “Tragic poetry reminds us of facts we know in our blood and, at our worst, wish to forget.”





Head of Mathematics, Jonitha Peterpillai, shares her innovative journey towards teaching mathematics without paper. She explores the use of OneNote as a transformative teaching tool, highlighting its potential to streamline learning, enhance student engagement, and promote sustainable practices. Jonitha's reflections offer an inspiring look at how technology can reshape traditional approaches to education.

## Paper-free Maths in Todd: The story so far

After attending an eye-opening INSET session on the powerful potential of OneNote for whole-class teaching, I decided to embrace a paper-free approach to teaching Year 7 maths. For the past 18 months, I've been using OneNote to deliver Todds' lessons, transforming the way we learn

and interact. Just as many industries discovered more efficient workflows during the pandemic, education too has evolved. Although those times presented significant challenges, they also revealed new possibilities for how we teach and learn.

In this article, I'll highlight my favourite features of OneNote that have streamlined my planning and marking, allowing me to tailor my lessons to meet the individual needs of each learner in my class.

### Feature 1: Personalised tasks

Each student can be provided with worksheets that are scaffolded and tailored to their individual needs. This preparation can be done well in advance of the lesson, reducing concerns about photocopying and distributing materials on the day. Additionally, since pupils work on their own tasks in OneNote, they can concentrate on their learning without worrying about keeping up with their peers or being aware that they have different worksheets. Extension tasks can also be distributed easily and discreetly during lessons, ensuring that no student feels pressured to work faster than others.

### Feature 2: Eco-friendly efficiency

With OneNote, absolutely no paper or time is wasted! I shudder at the memory of times when I had to discard incorrectly sized or poorly printed worksheets, or when I overprinted tasks that students never got around to completing. I also recall the frustration of being well-organised, only to forget or misplace the photocopied materials. The hours spent searching for a working

photocopier or racing to beat another teacher to it are now a thing of the past. By going paper-free, these issues are eliminated, saving resources and streamlining my workflow.

### Feature 3: Flexible tools for learning needs

Sharing resources with students has become much more efficient. Instead of struggling with students typing out website addresses from the board, I can provide clickable links directly in OneNote. I can also share my notes and PowerPoint slides for students to annotate, which eliminates issues with copying errors. Additionally, I can easily add grid lines, squared paper, or lined paper in various colours, such as beige or blue, to their pages. This flexibility supports their learning needs by accommodating individual requirements and enhancing readability without any hassle.

### Feature 4: Teach from anywhere in the room

With the screen-sharing function, teachers can use their stylus to annotate directly on OneNote, eliminating the need to stand at the board throughout the lesson. This allows for a more dynamic teaching experience and better engagement with students. Additionally, pupils can share their work with the class, and teachers can quickly display exemplary work to motivate and inspire the rest of the class.

### Feature 5: Paper-free marking solutions

Both pupils and teachers can access OneNote from anywhere, removing the hassle of lost exercise books and physical paperwork. Teachers no longer need to take home stacks of books to mark, as all work can be reviewed and assessed digitally. This streamlines the marking process and keeps everything organised and accessible.

### Conclusion: Lessons learned

- The more students are accustomed to charging their devices, the better. Maintaining a paper-free environment consistently helps them adjust.
- The stylus is crucial for Mathematics, where freehand writing and drawing are essential. For subjects like English or History, the typing feature might be sufficient.
- While assessments still need to be completed on paper, photos of these assessments can be inserted into OneNote, keeping all work in one digital place. Students can then respond to teacher feedback directly on OneNote, enhancing their progress.





Deputy Head of Learning Support and History Teacher, Bev Murphy, provides a comprehensive look at Dyslexia. She unpacks what Dyslexia is and shares practical strategies for creating inclusive and supportive classroom environments. Bev's expertise offers valuable guidance for teachers, ensuring pupils with this learning difference can thrive academically and build confidence in their abilities.

## Supporting our dyslexic students: A practical guide

As teachers our greatest asset is our knowledge and understanding of our students. At Tudor, we are often fortunate to teach the same girls across the Key Stages, getting to know them well. These days educators and parents are increasingly aware of dyslexic traits, so that most of our students will arrive having had some form of assessment. However, their individual learning profiles can vary considerably, making providing appropriate support for every student increasingly challenging. This article builds on a presentation I gave to the Teaching and Learning Group, which explores how addressing some of the most common issues faced by our dyslexic students can benefit the entire cohort.

### How does dyslexia impact on learning?

Dyslexia is often described as a "barrier to learning" because it can have a wide-ranging impact on a student's ability to access information and communicate their understanding. Although there is still no single agreed definition of dyslexia, the findings of the Rose Report (2009) that it is "a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling" are widely accepted. Dyslexia can also affect oral communication and cause difficulties when working with numbers or reading musical notation. There may also be co-occurring conditions, such as dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder or dyscalculia, and poor working memory or slow processing speed. Some students may have visual issues, where text is blurred, stands out or moves around the page.

They can struggle managing their time, keeping track of their belongings, or mastering skills such as learning times tables or telling left from right. In diagnosing students, Sophie Harper, the Educational Psychologist who conducts EP assessments for Tudor families, notes that dyslexia "can have a substantial and long-term effect on aspects of academic work, and when working under the pressure of time." Yet dyslexia should not be viewed as a barrier to achievement, not least because it occurs across the academic spectrum and some of the highest-level thinkers may also be dyslexic. As noted in our 2022 ISI Report, with effective support, these girls can "make progress which is at least as good as that of their peers".



### A "history of difficulties"

A dyslexic student's early experience of education can often leave them with enduring issues of insecurity, which are well-established by the time they arrive at Tudor. As children, we all faced the challenge of learning to read, write and spell effectively. But once mastered, much like learning to drive a car, the processes become automated, and it is all too easy to forget the complexity required. For dyslexic students, literacy skills continue to require greater levels of focus and attention. Common issues faced by dyslexic students may include:

- The quality of their written work is noticeably weaker than their oral contributions.
- They have difficulties sounding out words.
- They may spell the same word several different ways in a single piece of writing.
- They can find it difficult to recall sequences.
- They read quite fluently, but are lacking in expression and afterwards cannot recall what they have read.
- They can think at a high level in maths, but need a calculator for simple sums.
- They have issues with word retrieval, perhaps mis-naming, using generic terms such as "stuff" or employing placeholders like "you know" or "yeah".

Receiving a diagnosis of dyslexia can be liberating; students finally understand why they find many aspects of school life so much more difficult than their peers. They are likely to have received targeted group or individual support, which often allows them to make progress and experience success. However, for other students, the diagnosis may have had a negative impact. Perhaps they felt embarrassed to be singled out to attend learning support. Their parents may be wary of their child being 'labelled' or may become overly

invested in securing extra tuition and additional work. Historically, dyslexic students were often dismissed as being lazy, immature, or simply not trying hard enough. Thankfully, these days we have a much more informed understanding of their difficulties. Even so, the classroom can still be a difficult environment for them to navigate. Some common concerns expressed by Tudor girls include:

"I don't understand anything in this subject. I am just copying from the board", "When I don't understand the lesson, I am more likely to mess around", "Sometimes, I miss things because the lesson moves on too quickly", and "I always get extra time in exams, but only a few teachers give it in class tests and assessments". Worryingly, these students are also likely to say they understand when they do not, in order not to seem different from their peers. Sometimes they rely on a friend to help them, copy other students' work, or use guesswork to select information, so that the task is completed, but without any underlying understanding. Due to the cognitive load required to try and keep up with their peers, they will also be the students most likely to be tired and lacking in focus, particularly towards the end of the day, all cumulating in a lack of engagement.

### "I don't understand any of this. I'm just copying from the board."

Copying from the board is the task most frequently raised by dyslexic students as a difficulty. Equally, avoiding copying from the board and providing printed notes is also the most common adjustment recommended by educational psychologists for dyslexic students, **because it is such a cognitively demanding activity, which requires the student to split their attention, whilst performing**





**multiple tasks.** Providing pre-written notes and instructions allows the student to focus on developing understanding, rather than the mechanics of writing. If the notes can be delivered electronically, this will also support students in being able to annotate and manipulate the material. Putting instructions and supporting materials for prep onto Teams has been enormously beneficial in supporting students who struggle with organisation.

**“I always get extra time in exams, but only a few teachers give it in class tests and assessments.”**

Extra time is the most common access arrangement awarded to dyslexic students. To qualify, a student will have at least two standard scores of 84 or below

(when 100 is the average), in two separate areas of learning. However, many of Tudor’s dyslexic students will have a clutch of below average scores, which may be significantly lower. Therefore, effective use of extra time is essential to demonstrate their understanding fully. Whilst the overall aim is still to complete more of the paper in the available time, the advice to students now focuses on effective examination techniques to make the best use of their time. Some of the areas which are particularly relevant to our dyslexic students are planning and proofreading.

Having the opportunity to practise using extra time is invaluable in understanding what works best for them under exam conditions. It is also a much more informative measure for their teacher as to what level that student is presently working at. Sometimes, it is not practical to give a student extra time during a lesson. In

which case, it may be appropriate to make reasonable adjustments, such as allowing them to complete 25% fewer questions, or to take the lack of extra time into account when marking.

**“When I don’t understand the lesson, I am more likely to mess around.”**

In this age of Tik Tok, Tudor’s ongoing focus on improving literacy skills reflects how fundamental reading is to academic achievement and enriching our life experience. Sadly, the educational experiences of many dyslexic students mean they often become resistant to reading, which also impacts vocabulary and spelling. In supporting our dyslexic students in extracting meaning from text, how the information is set out is important. The use of colour and clear headings to break up information into topics allows easier navigation around the page and helps define subject areas. This visual layout of information is especially helpful for dysphonic dyslexics, who would struggle providing examples of words that rhyme or start with the same sound. They benefit from mind maps, annotated drawing and diagrams, or kinesthetic revision strategies, such as putting sticky labels in different places or walking around as they revise. Some dyslexics are dyseidetic, where they have visual processing issues, having to re-decode words every time they appear, even if they have just read them. These students find auditory modes of learning helpful, such as mnemonics for spellings, or recording themselves reading their notes, and listening to this back via headphones. Many dyslexics also have problems with processing and working memory, which really can only be overcome by ongoing and frequent repetition. In such cases, it is better to encourage them to learn a few things well and then gradually build up that knowledge.

**“I don’t know what to do. I really need some sort of framework to help me get started with my writing.”**

We can all relate to the daunting prospect of a blank white page. I certainly felt like that when I began writing this article! Hopefully, our students will come to appreciate the power of writing a draft, which they can then refine. However, due to a lack of confidence, dyslexic students can often become fixated on making the first line perfect, so they end up writing very little. It can be an uphill battle to persuade them of the benefits of planning since they often see it as extra work. Exam students find model answers particularly helpful to show them what they should be working towards. Providing an outline helps the student see what is required and

how to organise the task. For the Todds and IIs starter sentences can be the most effective prompt, as well as providing them with a glossary of key words to include, which also supports spelling.

**How else can we support our students in the classroom?**

The Teaching and Learning group has showcased excellent innovations by colleagues which have made the classroom more accessible. Using OneNote ensures that students will have a full catalogue of well-organised and accessible resources as well as directed feedback on their own work. Differential tasks can be set, allowing students to work at their own level without feeling singled out. Many departments are using online quizzes, where the facility to review and repeat is especially beneficial for dyslexic students. The recent move to putting prep instructions and resources online has been a game changer for those girls who would instantly lose a worksheet or never have time to copy down the prep at the end of a lesson.

The most important thing we can do to support our dyslexic students is to listen to their needs. As I stated at the beginning, this article was borne out of conversations with individual girls. However, despite differences in their individual learning profiles, the adjustments that they felt would enable them to progress were remarkably uniform. So, as promised, here is the summary of those requests.

- Don’t ask them to copy from the board.
- Provide printed notes.
- Allow extra time for tests and assessments or make reasonable adjustments.
- Give support with planning a written task.
- Allow extra time for a reading task.
- Give them time to process and produce a response.
- Provide glossaries of key words and spellings.
- Be patient if they ask a question that has already been answered.

As teachers we often worry that failure can become a downward spiral, as the disillusioned student puts in less and less effort. However, happily, the reverse is particularly true of dyslexic students, who may have had few opportunities to experience success. The more we can facilitate their access to learning the more they will realise they are capable of achieving.







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