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THE TUDOR TEACHER

SPRING 2024

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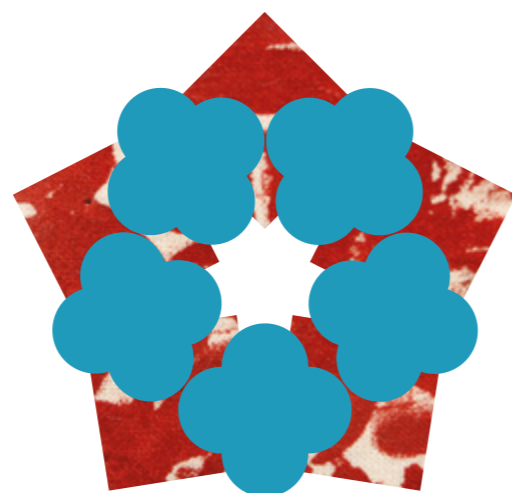
Contents

Introduction

It gives me enormous pleasure to introduce this inaugural edition of The Tudor Teacher. At Tudor Hall we recognise that the single biggest indicator of improving our pupils' academic outcomes is a teaching staff engaged in professional development, reflection and improvement. This publication, and the Teaching and Learning Group which initiated it, is a manifestation of our commitment to this and our commitment to thinking deeply about education in an all-girls, full-boarding context. We also hope that the girls will be inspired by their teachers' professionalism in role-modelling lifelong learning and demonstrating a commitment to best-practice pedagogy.

When supporting our teachers and House staff, with their development in particular areas of professional practice, either in the classroom and boarding house, or on the stage and all-weather surface, we encourage them to engage with contemporary ideas and thinking. This might take the form of reading, listening to podcasts, pursuing their own craft outside of school hours or engaging with wider networking beyond our campus. This then enables us to make better-informed choices about "what works" — perhaps working smarter not necessarily "just" harder — and in the long run be more likely to positively impact our girls' experiences and outcomes. Such reflection is part of our Six Pillars and sits alongside other strategies such as "collaborative classrooms", "Friday spotlights" and pupil-led initiatives. We want our girls to have just as much of a voice in their learning as their teachers, hence two articles written here by Sixth Form girls on their own experiences this academic year.

Within this Spring Term edition you will read the work of colleagues who are engaging with new developments in education or innovative teaching methods and putting them into practice in the classroom. Their work will help shape our provision going forward. Head of Mathematics, Vikki Marsh, reflects upon the literacy strategy launched in January; our Director of Digital Learning, James Wakeley, shares his thoughts on leveraging assisted AI in education, whilst PE teacher and Head of Hockey James Long outlines the value of mini whiteboards in lessons. We also value our pupils' academic voice. Amelie, Froggy and Halyna offer their views on impactful approaches during their own time at Tudor; hopefully their thoughts and experiences will act as further motivation to us, their teachers!

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. Special thanks to Miss Vikki Marsh for her inspirational coordination of the Teaching and Learning Group and pulling all these articles together whilst mocks, reports and coursework were dominating much of our time and thinking.

The next edition of The Tudor Teacher will be published in the Autumn Term, 2024. 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...

What began as two teachers standing at the front of the Hall during INSET, sharing what we had been reading about in current pedagogy that we hoped would also be of interest to our colleagues, has since evolved into something truly special! Tudor Hall's Teaching and Learning Group is now a large and thriving committee of enthusiastic and committed teaching staff from across all subject disciplines of the school curriculum. As the fleet of cars and coaches attempts to make an efficient exit so that their precious cargo can get home to enjoy an exeat weekend or half term break, this team of dedicated teachers chooses to stay behind and put a pause on their own well-deserved rest in order to collaborate, share their expertise, drive forward new initiatives, and discuss how best to support the academic journey of all our pupils at Tudor Hall. In true *habeo ut dem* spirit, those staff who cannot be there for these meetings are still actively participating in other ways, whether it is engaging in the very active forum on our MS Teams page, suggesting blogs, podcasts and scientific papers for the weekly Teaching and Learning Spotlight, or supporting and developing the group's whole-school interventions with enthusiasm and consistency to ensure they benefit all of our pupils.

Mr Simon Smith joined the school community in September as our Deputy Head (Academic) and really picked up the baton in terms of support. He recognises the significant role teaching and learning has to play in any successful school and his passion, along with our Headmistress, Ms Julie Lodrick's, continuing encouragement, has given the Teaching and Learning Group a fresh new momentum.

At Tudor Hall we recognise what an exciting time it is to be in the teaching profession. No longer are we relying on anecdotal evidence or the latest "fad" to improve our craft. Significant advancements in neuroscience and imaging techniques mean we have a much clearer understanding of how the brain functions and the possible hinderances its processes can have on learning and memory. Huge strides in cognitive science have also had significant implications on modern pedagogical practice and educators are actively engaging in research, using rigorous scientific methodology and analysis in order to publish reliable, repeatable results. The Teaching and Learning Group is evidence-informed. We analyse, critique and discuss the latest research and consider the "best bets" for our pupils in the extraordinary learning environment that our full-boarding, all-girls school provides. Tudor Hall has always prided itself on catering for the individual, but the phenomenal expertise of our Learning Support and English as an Additional Language (EAL) departments particularly have fed into this process and they are a key component of the Teaching and Learning Group.

Our work thus far has been dynamic and wide-ranging. We have led whole-staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training sessions on Retrieval Practice, Feedback, Questioning and Working Memory. As our group has grown, so have our aspirations! As Mr Smith details in his introduction, this academic year has seen the launch of a number of exciting and forward-thinking initiatives, many of which our colleagues have written about in this edition. And, much like the teaching profession as a whole, we are not only reflective practitioners but responsive ones too, and the Teaching and Learning Group certainly has no intentions of slowing down!

To end on a personal note, I am very proud to have been part of the Teaching and Learning Group at Tudor Hall since its infancy. It is such a privilege to witness the passion, expertise and inspiration that our members bring to each and every meeting, and to see our work directly feed into the academic life of the school to inform policy. The dedication of everyone in the Group highlights what I am sure is one of the many reasons parents choose to send their daughters to Tudor Hall School: our teaching staff are truly committed to providing the most effective learning experiences for each and every one of our pupils. Our girls really are at the heart of everything we do.

Vikki Marsh, Head of Mathematics
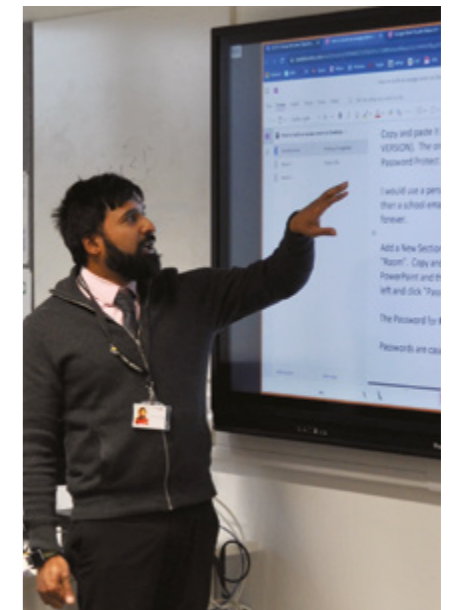
Student Perspectives

As one of three successful Oxbridge applicants this year, Amelie (UVI) reflects on her journey and the support she has received throughout the application process.

I have aspired to study at Oxford University since Year 7, when I moved to England and joined Todd. But the endpoint has always seemed so distant and hard to reach, until some preparation work had officially begun.

It was some time in the IIIs when I realised that I wanted to pursue something biology-related in the future, but it was not at all clear which branch I wanted to study. So, I started off with some general biology reading in the summer of the IVs. It was ambitious of me to start with "The Selfish Gene" by Richard Dawkins and, while it was eye-opening and very rewarding, it also required some perseverance to traverse its 400 pages. The importance of extra reading is unquestionable and, with limited time, choosing the right book is essential. It must interest you (so you can power through it while enjoying it), and must be relevant to the course you want to study (so you are able to incorporate it in the personal statement and if mentioned, it could well be the topic Oxbridge chooses to discuss with you in an interview). The science department and Mr Thompson were so helpful in recommending reading lists, so don't hesitate to reach out to them if you are unsure!

In the summer after GCSEs, I realised that I must take responsibility and start looking for work experience opportunities. Without any connections or much of a clue where to start, I searched "work experience" on Google. The NHS Oxford University Hospitals website told me to contact departments directly if I want to obtain a placement opportunity from them. I drafted and sent out emails to four departments of interest, attaching a CV I had made on a free CV builder website. I was very fortunate that the Clinical Biochemistry department at the John Radcliffe Hospital contacted me offering two days of work experience in the October half term! These opportunities often require organising months in advance, as lots of paperwork needs to be filled in and the school also needs to be made aware. I learnt a lot in the two days of shadowing in different parts of the hospital lab, being passed on from one biomedical scientist to another, taking notes as they

explained their various roles, how they process patient samples, and draw conclusions from quantitative results.

Having thoroughly enjoyed the experience, I reached out to more departments in the February of LVI, sending nine emails this time. Most responses started with "Unfortunately...", but one contained information about a Life Sciences Programme organised by the Oxford University Hospitals. I followed up on that, was referred to other contacts, and ended up securing one week of work experience in April. This time was even more fascinating than the last: I had the opportunity to shadow in labs across nine different departments at the John Radcliffe, which allowed me to gain an understanding of the many branches of biomedical science and how much they varied. Perhaps most significantly, this also helped me finalise my university course decision. It was a truly incredible experience.

Throughout the year leading up to the application, we had frequent meetings with Mr Thompson, who watched and guided us every step along the way, reminding us of what to do next and keeping us on track. From college selection, open day planning, personal statement drafting, to written exam preparation (from which I was fortunate be spared as there was no written assessment for biochemistry!), we felt like we were in such safe hands. In the term leading up to interviews, the science department kindly met with me twice every week, where I had the chance to ask about any topic beyond the curriculum that I wanted to learn more about and explore in greater depth. These weekly academic discussions, along with the seven mock interviews in the space of one month arranged by Mr Thompson, meant that by the time the real interviews arrived I was feeling much more confident and capable, knowing that I could not have had more support from the school.

Froggy (LVI) shares her experience of support from academic staff beyond lessons.

The subject clinics provided by Tudor are invaluable and they are such a big help, not just when working towards exams but all year round. Each department has its own clinics at particular times throughout the week and typically there will be different sessions for different year groups. This is what makes them especially beneficial as I know if I am ever stuck or need support, I will be able to receive tailored help specific to my needs. While preparing for my GCSEs last summer, both the Maths and English clinics helped me considerably. Every Saturday, the Maths Department provided a clinic throughout the morning where we could sit for hours at a time getting one-to-one help both from teachers and each other. We would go through past paper questions as well as any lesson material we needed to review. I truly believe this additional support helped me when it came to tackling some of the harder questions in the exams, and in the end enabled me to aim that bit higher. Similarly, with English there were frequent clinics which helped immensely, both with coursework and before the exams. The most notable time was when the English Department held clinic the Sunday night before our English Language exam; we reviewed the structure of the exam paper and had any urgent

questions answered, helping to calm those pre-exam nerves!

In addition to clinics there is also Academic Mentoring held on Saturday mornings. This is again one-on-one help however rather than teachers assisting us it is older students volunteering their time to help the younger year groups. There are mentors for every subject, and they are all A-level standard so they have the confidence and expertise to aid Todds all the way to Vs. In my opinion, this is a very special aspect of Tudor and really highlights the *habeo ut dem* ethos of the community here.

Personally, I think both the clinics and Academic Mentoring are incredibly helpful provisions. They have made preparing for exams and revising that much easier, and really helped boost my confidence. I believe we are all very lucky to have such options available to us at Tudor and I am so appreciative of the teaching staff and older girls for giving even more of their time to support us. Now that I am studying A Level Maths, I am assisting in one of the department's clinics and I really enjoy helping the younger girls at the School!

Halyna (LVI), Head Girl, shares her thoughts on retrieval practice opportunities in lessons.

My experience of retrieval activities has been such a positive one, especially during my GCSEs. I was studying more subjects then, with multiple topics to review for each of them. In science, for example, the practice and repetition of skills and content at the beginning of the lessons took a variety of forms such as low-stakes quizzes or model answers to six-marker exam questions. These were all very encouraging as we would gradually start to answer them more precisely and efficiently, with some AO1 responses becoming almost automatic. It was also useful as it would prompt us to go and revise the topics that we may have been more unsure of as part of our independent study. Although there are many different ways of facilitating retrieval practice during a lesson, the ones I remembered best were those that were open to discussion or got the whole class involved and engaged. A particular favourite for me was creating acronyms - many of the silly abbreviations we devised are still ingrained in my mind and those of my friends! Other starters such as vocab games, crosswords, quizzes, Ted Talk challenges, or using web-based resources such as Blooket or Kahoot, not only enabled us to consolidate

our knowledge, but also made the rest of the lessons more exciting and engaging after such an interactive warm-up. There would also be harder challenges which integrated different skills or topics we had previously learnt, or contained more problem-solving aspects to them. These would get everyone focused and working together or individually to figure them out and prompted lots of class discussion. I found these most rewarding as getting the final answer, or close to it, was very satisfying.
I believe that having retrieval opportunities as a regular feature of our lessons at Tudor Hall really benefits everyone as you can see individual progress and improvement with each session, and also have a bit of fun!

Our Director of Digital Learning, Mr James Wakeley, shares one of his blog posts from the School's popular IT Hub. In the ever-changing world of technology, the IT Hub keeps staff up to date with the latest technological advancements and provides a wealth of resources and training.

Leveraging Assisted AI in Education: Transforming the UK's Learning Landscape

In an age defined by technological advancements, education in the UK is undergoing a significant transformation, largely fuelled by Assisted Artificial Intelligence (AI). From personalised learning experiences to administrative efficiency, AI is changing the way educators and students engage with knowledge. In this blog post, I will explore what Assisted AI offers the education sector in the UK and some considerations to keep in mind.

The Promise of Assisted AI

- **Personalised Learning:** Assisted AI in education can analyse individual students' learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. It tailors educational content to cater to each student's specific needs, enabling more effective learning.

- **Digital Assistants and Chatbots:** AI-powered chatbots and digital assistants can provide students with immediate access to information and resources. These digital helpers are available around the clock, supporting students in their academic journey.

- **Administrative Efficiency:** Educational institutions in the UK are using AI to streamline administrative processes. From managing schedules to processing paperwork, AI reduces the administrative burden, allowing schools and colleges to allocate resources more efficiently.

- **Assessment Revolution:** AI technology is transforming the way assessments are conducted. Machine learning algorithms can evaluate assignments, exams and essays, ensuring objectivity and consistency in grading.

- **Addressing Equity and Inclusion:** Assisted AI aims to make education more inclusive. By providing personalised resources and support, AI helps students with disabilities and levels the educational playing field.

Considerations and Challenges

- **Data Privacy:** With AI's heavy reliance on data, it's essential to safeguard pupils' personal information. Educational institutions must prioritise data privacy and comply with relevant regulations.

- **Bias in Algorithms:** AI algorithms are only as good as the data they're trained on. Bias in algorithms can perpetuate inequalities. The UK's education sector should ensure that AI systems are regularly audited for fairness and impartiality.

- **Teacher Training:** To fully harness the power of AI, educators need training. Institutions must invest in teacher development to enable them to effectively incorporate AI into their teaching methods.

- **Technology Integration:** Integrating AI into existing educational systems can be challenging. It's crucial to ensure that the technology is seamlessly integrated, enhancing the educational experience rather than creating additional complexity.
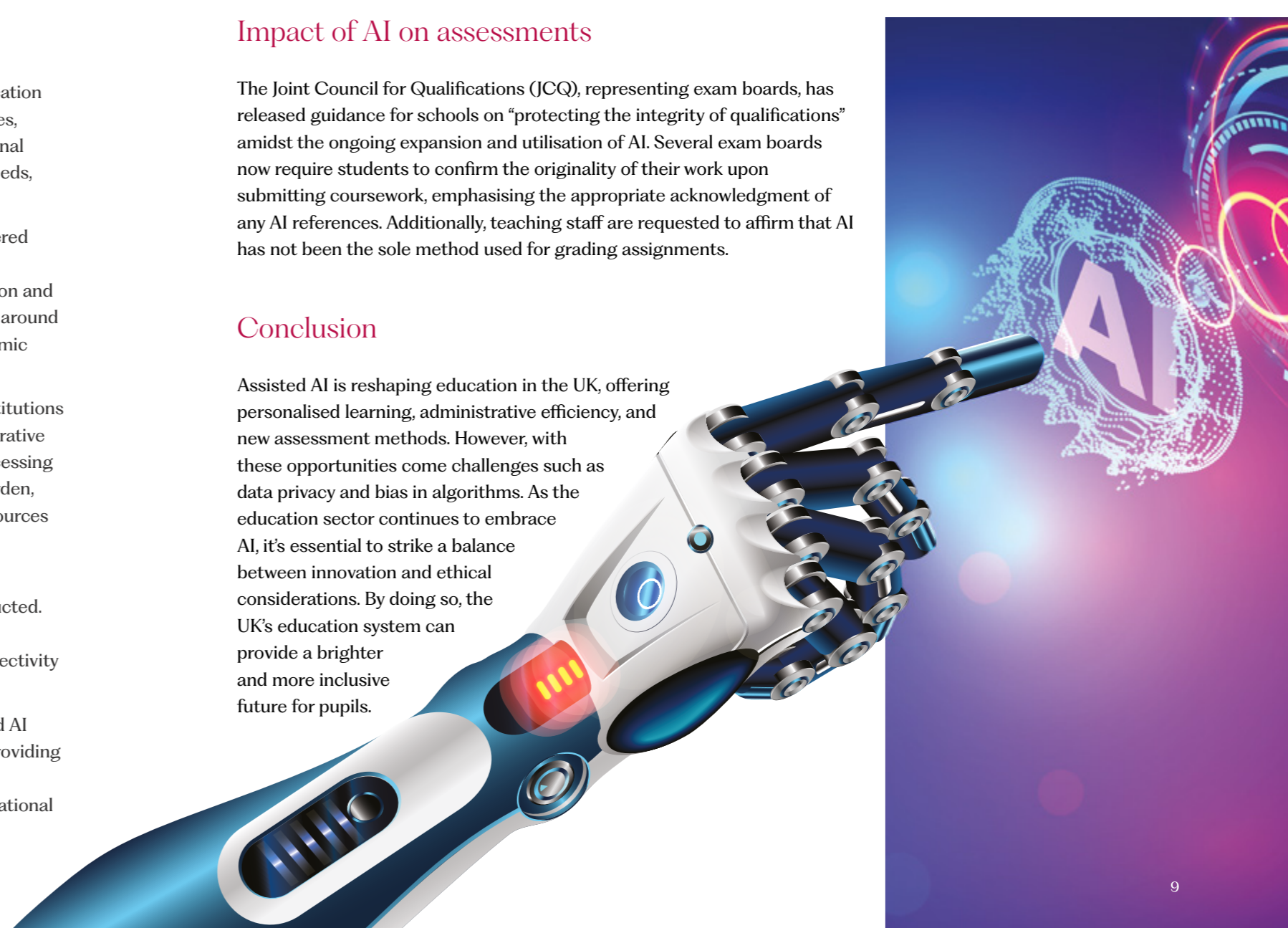
Impact of AI on assessments

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), representing exam boards, has released guidance for schools on "protecting the integrity of qualifications" amidst the ongoing expansion and utilisation of AI. Several exam boards now require students to confirm the originality of their work upon submitting coursework, emphasising the appropriate acknowledgment of any AI references. Additionally, teaching staff are requested to affirm that AI has not been the sole method used for grading assignments.

Conclusion

Assisted AI is reshaping education in the UK, offering personalised learning, administrative efficiency, and new assessment methods. However, with these opportunities come challenges such as data privacy and bias in algorithms. As the education sector continues to embrace AI, it's essential to strike a balance between innovation and ethical considerations. By doing so, the UK's education system can provide a brighter and more inclusive future for pupils.

Unleashing the Power of Mini Whiteboards: A Teacher's Guide

Mini whiteboards have become my secret weapon in the classroom, revolutionising the way I engage with students and assess their understanding. In this article, I'll share my journey with mini whiteboards and offer practical tips on incorporating them into your teaching routine.

Tip 1: Embracing Change

I wasn't always a fan of mini whiteboards. It took me about eight or nine years into my teaching career before I gave them a chance. Two years ago, something clicked, and now, I can't imagine teaching without them. What changed my mind? Head of Teaching and Learning at Totteridge Academy, Adam Boxer. His challenge to gather more insights from students during a lesson resonated with me, and mini whiteboards became an inseparable part of my teaching toolkit.

Tip 2: Streamlining the Process

Making mini whiteboards work in the classroom involves setting up a physical routine. In my setup, each row of students has a basket containing mini whiteboards, pens, and erasers. By training students on the distribution process, we've streamlined the setup to a swift 30 seconds. Shaping this routine and avoiding disruptions during this process is crucial, ensuring a smooth integration of mini whiteboards into the classroom.

Tip 3: Overcoming Resistance

Anticipating resistance, I addressed concerns about doodling and distractions head-on. Clear expectations and consequences, like staying after class to clean boards for doodling, set the tone. It's about creating an environment where students understand the significance of these tools and their role in the learning process.

Tip 4: Check and Consolidate

Think of mini whiteboards as more than just a check for understanding. They are a consolidation tool. Engaging the entire class in writing and practicing on mini whiteboards helps solidify newly acquired knowledge. It's a dual-purpose approach that ensures not only assessment but also active participation in the learning process.

Tip 5: Prerequisite Checks

Before launching into explanations, conduct a prerequisite check using mini whiteboards. Assess whether students have the foundational knowledge needed for the upcoming lesson. Identifying gaps early on allows for targeted interventions, setting the stage for a more effective learning experience.

Tip 6: Consolidation after Explanations

After explaining a concept, mini whiteboards shine as tools for consolidation. Students articulate their understanding by answering questions or solving problems on the boards. This process reinforces learning and provides valuable insights for gauging overall comprehension.

Conclusion

Incorporating mini whiteboards into your teaching practice is a game-changer. From efficient information gathering to promoting student engagement and understanding, these small boards pack a punch. Embrace the insights and tips shared here, and discover how mini whiteboards can create a more interactive and effective learning environment for your students.
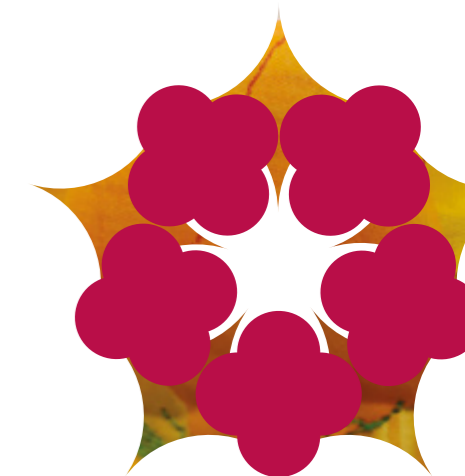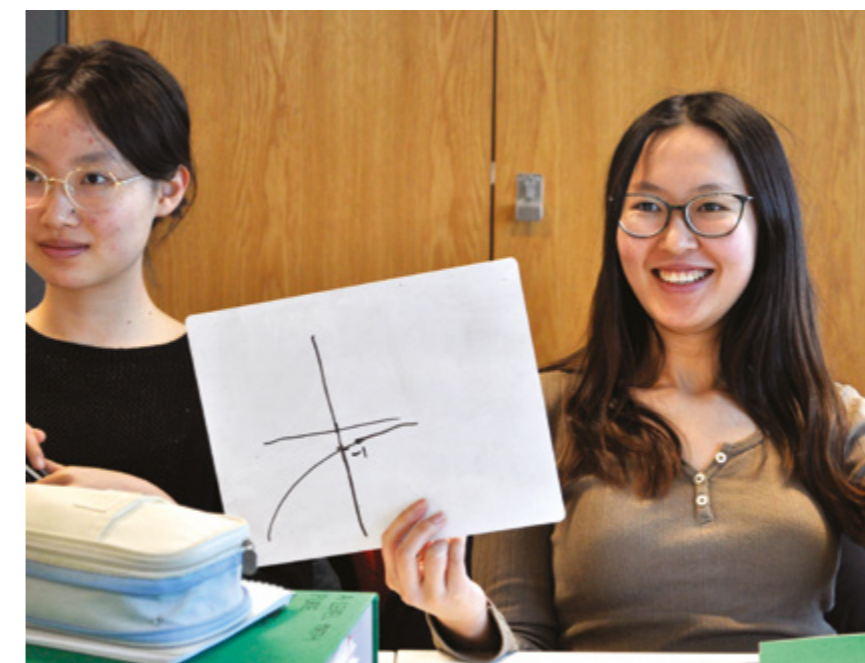
Adam Boxer has a podcast on mini whiteboards, which has influenced how I use them and talks over tips in this article in more detail.

A session focused on the number 1 tool for attention/participation and checking for understanding

Podcast link: tipsforteachers.co.uk/mini-whiteboards/

Vikki Marsh, Head of Mathematics, shares some of the Teaching and Learning Group's work on developing a culture of school-wide Disciplinary Literacy and the research driving these initiatives.

How many words do you know?

The English language comprises well over a million words - far too many for one person to know them all - yet academics have struggled for years to agree on the number of words one should know. Most estimates suggest that between 50,000 and 60,000 words are required for pupils to succeed in school and beyond, but our understanding of the richness and complexities of vocabulary, where words originated and how they formed, as well as how and why they are used, all serve to extend our knowledge of the English language and expand our lexicon.[1]

While researching literacy and vocabulary, one thing has been abundantly clear: being word-poor has far-reaching consequences on our life chances.[6] There is a well-established correlation between a pupil's vocabulary size when they leave school and both the likelihood they graduate from university and their future income.[7,8] In his paper, A Wealth of Words, Ed Hirsch Jr leaves no doubt when he states that "the key to increasing upward mobility is expanding vocabulary."[8]

At Tudor Hall we know that we teach complex academic language well, but when this is enveloped in sophisticated vocabulary it can prove a barrier to the comprehension and interpretation of texts. During our Teaching and Learning Group meetings we have heard a number of anecdotes describing such instances. Access to questions posed in public examination papers can be hampered due to a more limited grasp of such vocabulary. For example, the following question is taken from a GCSE Physics paper and not only does it contain lots of the expected subject-specific vocabulary, but also assumes knowledge of words such as "severely," "hampered," "acrobatic" and "manoeuvres."

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that skilled reading, writing and talking, is crucial for our students to succeed in school."
Alex Quigley, author of the book Closing the Vocabulary Gap[1]

> The youth got fed up with constantly receiving shocks and decided to wear a grounded wrist strap when bouncing.
>
> This hampered his ability to perform acrobatic manoevres but did prevent the shocks.
>
> A grounded wrist strap contains a thin copper wire whch connects the youth's wrist to the trampoline frame.
>
> Suggest why the grounded wrist strap prevents shock.

Figure 1: Part (d) of a question from the 2018 AQA GCSE Physics: Static Electricity paper[5]

The instincts and professional judgement of our teaching staff are supported by the CEM data generated by our post-16 year groups. ALIS baseline testing places nearly two-thirds of our current UVI cohort in bands C or D for the vocabulary strand - as are just over half of the LVI cohort. The mean average standardised vocabulary scores for both year groups are also just below the national average.

ALIS CEM data		LVI	UVI
Band (%)	A	16	16
	B	28	19
	C	30	37
	D	26	28
Mean standardised score		98.0	97.6

Figure 2: Summary of ALIS CEM data in vocabulary section for the current LVI and UVI

Research has shown that this is clearly not just an issue for our pupils; there has been a national call to arms amongst the teaching profession in the UK to plug this "vocabulary gap." Nor is this a problem that we can blame on COVID. Back in 2018, GL Assessment conducted a study that analysed the reading ages of over 370,000 secondary school pupils in the UK. They found that just 53% of the 15 year-old girls sitting their

GCSE examinations that year had a reading age of 15 years or above, and this figure was even lower for boys.[2] The average reading age of a GCSE paper has been calculated as 15 years and 7 months,[5] painting the uncomfortable picture that a large proportion of pupils in the UK cannot access the vocabulary on the examination papers that are supposed to assess their subject knowledge.

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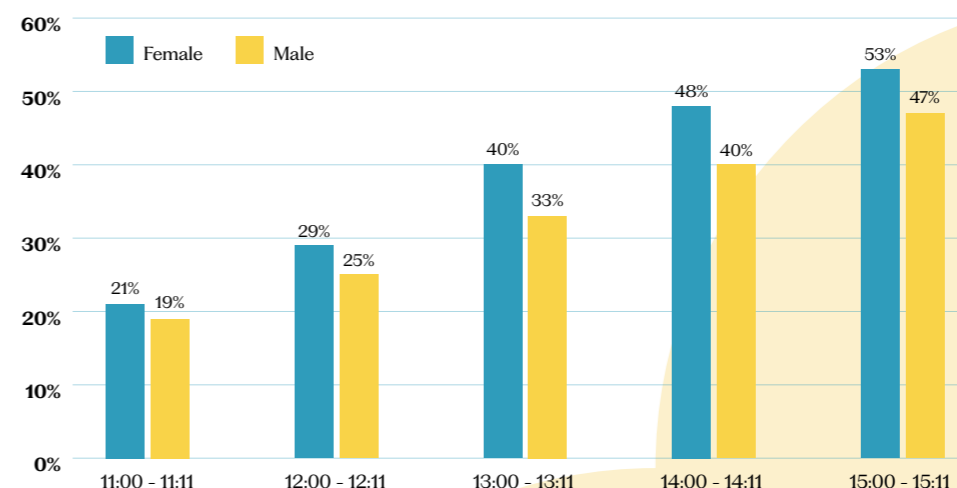

Figure 3: Percentage of students attaining reading age 15 by age and gender[2]

This study also looked at the relationship between reading age and performance on GCSE papers across a variety of subjects. A statistical measure called the correlation coefficient was used where a value of 0 indicates no association at all and 1 is a perfect agreement between both variables. The results listed in the table below are not only indicative of a positive correlation, but were all judged to be statistically significant. Perhaps most surprisingly, however, is that this relationship was just as strong for subjects such as Geography, Mathematics, History and Science as it was for English. GL Assessment's study has left no doubt that these subjects are just as vocabulary-heavy and that literacy is crucial for academic success in these disciplines.

GCSE subject	Correlation
English Language	0.65
Geography	0.65
Maths	0.63
History	0.61
Science Combined	0.61
English Literature	0.60
Drama	0.57
Citizenship	0.56
German	0.55

Figure 4: Correlation between reading age (as ascertained by New Group Reading Test) and performance on GCSE papers.[2]

In 2013, Beck, McKeown and Kucan introduced a tiered system for categorising vocabulary according to their level of complexity and utility.[3] Tier 1 language refers to the simple words used in everyday speech that are often learned implicitly, such as 'cat,' 'good' and 'because.' Tier 2 words however, are those that are more complex and academic in nature, such as 'benevolent,' 'sinister' and 'analyse.' We all know that the words we read can be very different from the words we say and Tier 2 words are more likely to occur in material that our students read. Lastly, Tier 3 vocabulary refers to those words that are subject-specific, such as 'photosynthesis,' 'numerator' and 'tsunami.' As secondary school teachers, we often emphasise words from this final tier when delivering our discipline-specific curricula; indeed, glossaries from textbooks and other resources often focus on these Tier 3 words.
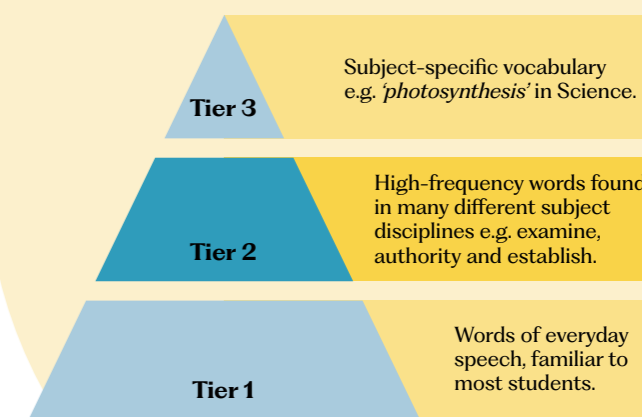

Figure 5: Beck et al's Tiers of Vocabulary[4]

Learning Tier 3 vocabulary is certainly a fundamental part of understanding curriculum content, but all our research shows that the key to pupils accessing this content successfully is by coupling it with a rich knowledge of Tier 2 vocabulary.

A key question for the Teaching and Learning Group this year has been how do we best enhance and enrich our pupils' vocabulary?

In the past, there may have been a propensity amongst secondary schools to look to their prep schools, SEND or English departments to bear the responsibility of developing and enriching our pupils' vocabulary. Secondary school teachers may not have viewed themselves as literacy experts or colleagues may have witnessed previous initiatives, such as the 'Literacy across the Curriculum' or 'National Literacy Strategy' of the late 1990s/early 2000s, as holding such promise but falling short. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) recently published a guidance report, Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools[4], that clearly addresses this necessary "change in tack." After reviewing a wealth of international research and consulting with teachers and other professionals, the EEF's findings have determined that "literacy in secondary school must not be seen as a basket of general skills. Instead, it must be grounded in the specifics of each subject." This marked shift away from generic literacy strategies to 'within-the-disciplines' learning utilises literacy as a tool to for accessing subject-specific content. Even more promising is that any research-informed interventions designed to increase literacy demands in each of our own disciplines, carefully aligned to our subjects' curricula, will also serve to enhance pupils' understanding and success across all subject areas. To steal and paraphrase one of JFK's famous statements, "ask not what we can do for literacy, but what literacy can do for us" and at Tudor Hall we believe that all staff have a shared responsibility to improve our pupils' vocabulary.

We certainly can't predict every word that could be used in every examination paper, but we can give our pupils a broader diet of vocabulary; provide them with the skills and knowledge to analyse the morphology of new, previously unseen words in order to derive their meaning; and encourage them to see the value (and joy!) in investing time in reading widely.

One of our biggest initiatives has been the launch of

"A key question for the Teaching and Learning Group this year has been how do we best enhance and enrich our pupils' vocabulary?"

the Word of the Week (WoW). Building on the work of Miss Catherine Simpson from the English Department, Miss Lindsey Cullen from the Classics Department and research conducted by colleagues at Torquay Academy, this term has witnessed an enthusiastic reception of the WoW across the school community. Largely driven by our dedicated pastoral team, a new word is introduced during Group Time each Monday morning. Tutor groups are invited to think about and discuss the definition, origins (etymology) and structure (morphology) of the word, as well as consider words similar in meaning (synonyms), opposite in meaning (antonyms) and give examples of the word in context. This explicit instruction of carefully selected Tier 2 vocabulary is not only designed to broaden our pupils' knowledge of words they are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech, but to help them make connections between words.
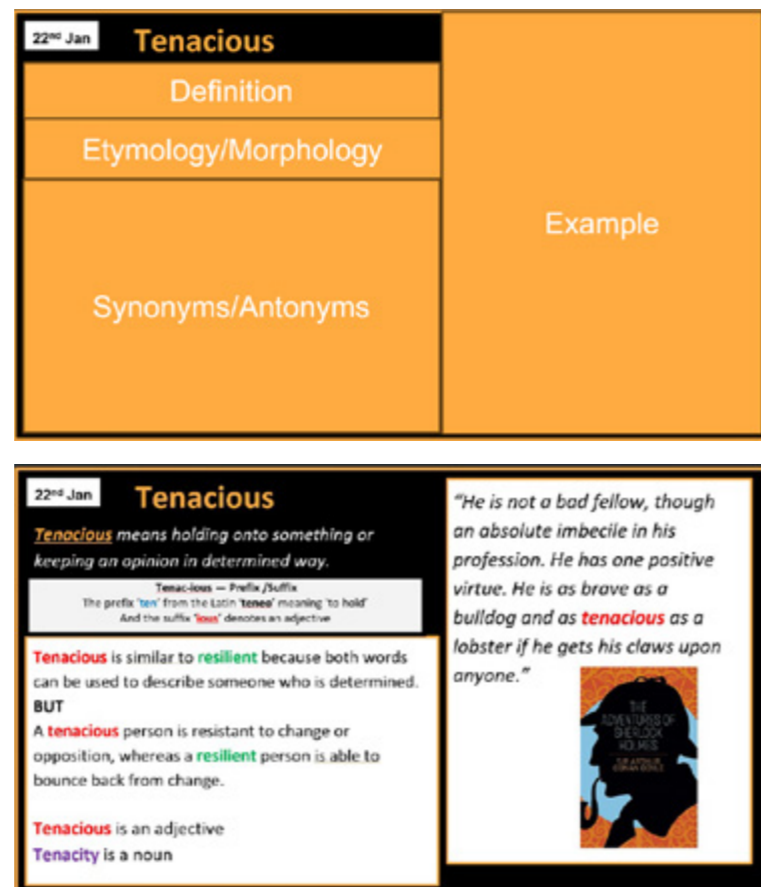

Figure 6: An example of the Word of the Week. Group Tutors begin with a slide that has just the new word displayed and can click on the different sections to reveal their contents during discussions with their tutees.

We have already seen from the Teaching and Learning Group's previous work developing areas such as Feedback and Working Memory, that students learn and make the best progress when they are given tools to engage in and revisit key vocabulary and subject content through retrieval practice. With this in mind, each WoW is accompanied by a different activity that Tutors can use later in the week with their tutees. At the end of every half term, there is an additional activity that incorporates many of the previous WoWs and gives pupils a further opportunity to reflect on all the vocabulary they have encountered so far.

Classroom teachers are also supporting the WoW endeavour by highlighting the vocabulary when the opportunity arises during their lessons, and the Senior Leadership Team have been surreptitiously using the latest WoW during their assemblies! Departments have begun displaying the WoWs in their bases around the school and our librarian, Mrs Lara Price, is playing a key role in exhibiting the WoWs in the school library.

Synonyms Activity

Below are five synonyms for our word of the week:

Abundance

We've muddled up the letters for each of them! Can you unscramble the letters and find all five synonyms?

WEHALT
BUNTOY
CAFEUNELF
HALTROPE
DIMRAY

Figure 7: An example of a WoW activity. This particular week involved anagrams. Can you find all five synonyms for 'abundance'

Following a successful trial, we hope to develop our work on the WoW to ensure it has even stronger links to our school curriculum. We intend to publish different sets of words and activities for each of the year groups, working closely with departments to ensure the vocabulary we choose is closely interwoven with the work our pupils will be learning in the classroom each week. This not only makes it more meaningful for our pupils, but helps them access and reinforce academic language across all disciplines.

Improving literacy is just one of a number of areas that the Teaching and Learning group is working on this academic year, and the Word of the Week is but one thread of this project. Like any school-wide initiative, it is most impactful when backed by evidence-informed research, with the support of the teaching community and the progress of all our girls in mind.

Figure 8: Miss Cullen's Word of the Week is on display in the Classics Room and focuses on a prefix with a Latin origin.

"The words we read can be very different from the words we say."

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