



Teaching & Learning Policy

Updating Policy Procedure

When a policy is due for review it will be emailed to the reviewer who will revise and highlight those updates and return the policy in full with the highlighted updates back to the Administrator.

When a policy reviewer becomes aware of **any updates** they will ask the Administrator to email the policy to them and follow the above procedure.

A policy is a statement of intent and the guidelines we follow, that is adopted by the Fortuna and Athena Federation's Governing Body.

Policy Reviewed by:

Rebecca Wyles/Olivia Parkin

Updated on:

January 2026

Date to be reviewed:

January 2028



Athena's Teaching and Learning Policy

Our Pedagogy

Industry Centred Learning

Teamwork

Leadership

Staying Positive

Problem Solving

Aiming High

What is our purpose?

At Athena School, we believe that our children will learn most effectively when they have access to a rich, deep and systematically planned curriculum that meets their diverse needs, academically, socially and culturally. To this aim, we have developed (and continue to develop) a curriculum with direction, and purpose, that builds aspiration and prepares pupils for their next steps. We recognise the need to nurture essential skills in our pupils, to enable them to succeed. The skills, identified through the Careers and Enterprise Company (C.E.C) are;

- Teamwork.
- Leadership.
- Staying positive.
- Creativity.
- Problem solving
- Aiming high
- Speaking
- Listening.



FORTUNA ATHENA
F E D E R A T I O N



Our thematic approach provides opportunities for children to make links between different areas of the curriculum and apply their knowledge as skills for their future.

Teaching and learning at Athena School reflects our children's needs and the necessity for them to learn through experiences in our local area and beyond, making choices for their futures by having industry-based learning embedded as the main driver of our curriculum.

Our approaches are rooted in the effective use of evidence-based research and our school-based practice experiences. We focus on what really matters for Athena School.



Our Universal Laws

‘Give the pupils something to do not something to learn’ -A Constructivism Theory	‘The idea is not to minimise cognitive load but to minimise irrelevant load’ -Cognitive Load Theory	‘What a child can do in cooperation today, they can do alone tomorrow’ -Social Constructivism Theory
‘A champion is defined not by their wins but how they can recover when they fall’ -Executive Functioning	‘Pupils must be taught <u>how</u> to think not <u>what</u> to think’ -Metacognition	‘Creativity follows mastery, so mastery of skills is the priority for young talent’ -Blooms’ Taxonomy



To make teaching and learning the best it can be at Athena, we have implemented TLAC into our practice.

Teach Like A Champion

Teach Like A Champion is a teaching approach that proposes a set of particular techniques for teachers to follow.

The philosophy behind it is that the solution to closing the achievement gap in schools lies in classroom practice itself, particularly around consistency and an embedded, shared vocabulary.

We will be building on 5 different techniques each term called our 'Focus 5'.

How does our curriculum promote high quality teaching and learning?

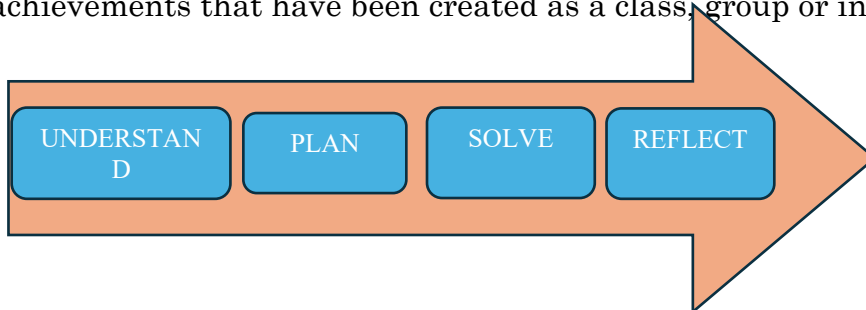
At our school, we ensure that the strategies we use to support the teaching and learning of our pupils is clearly displayed in our classrooms. This allows for familiarity, continuity, and support for both teachers and learners. It will support our pupil's ability to become independent learners by having these strategies at face value and using their metacognition to a point that they are able to find a strategy that supports them in the best way possible.

As Educators we have always known that children learn most when they are excited, having fun and being challenged by their learning. In each of the KS3 year groups, the approach is the same.

- WOW Lesson – This is the start of our 'Pole Star' – something that the children will discover, find out or see what will capture the children's imagination.
- Essential Question – Children will be asked to find out what question they will need to solve.
- – The teachers will design lessons which will engage the children and promote high level of learning, which is meaningful, with the main drive being a career pathway suited to our cohort.
- Critique – Children will become critically engaged and be motivated in helping others improve their work and be motivated to critique and improve their own.
- Industry Experts and Fieldwork- Pupils will have access to either working with an industry expert or going out of the classroom to approach more authentic learning.



- Pit Stops – This will serve a purpose. There may be 2 or 3 pit stops within the term where pupils will successfully present, display or take part in achievements that have been created as a class, group or independently.



We have, in the recent years, worked hard on our ability to create opportunities for our learners to use problem solving across our curriculum. Our pupils, with SEMH needs, may find problem solving a challenge due to:

- Confidence
- Reading level
- Mathematical ability (Fluency)
- Comprehension
- Seeing things in different ways

Our subject leaders decided that for our pupils to access problem solving tasks to a high standard, both our teachers and learners should follow a UPSR strategy. UPSR stands for Understand, Plan, Solve and Reflect.





This strategy allows our pupils to become reflective thinkers by understanding what they did, why they did it and why that is important. Our UPSR strategy can be used in all problem-solving activities and is clearly displayed in all of our classrooms to allow our learners to access this with both support and independently.

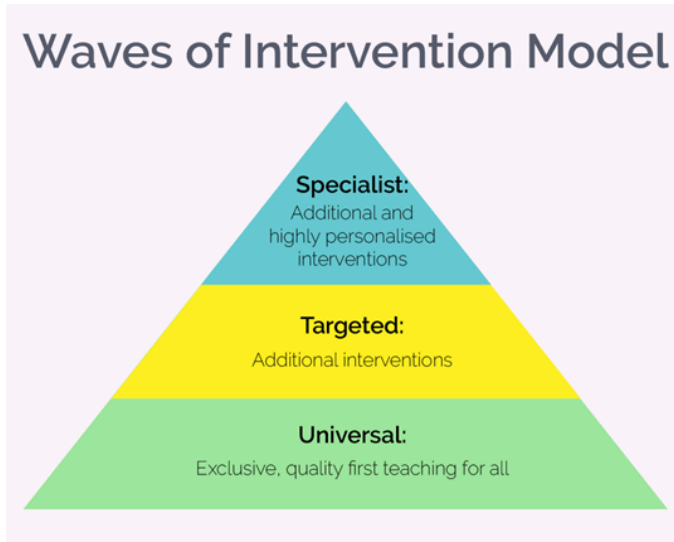
Understand 	Plan 
○ Read the problem ○ Identify the question ○ Circle what you know	○ Choose a strategy that makes sense and works for you ○ Make an estimate
Solve 	Check 
○ Try your strategy ○ Show all your work ○ Label and circle your answer	○ Explain and justify your answer ○ Decide if your answer is reasonable

At Athena, we are proud of our curriculum and ensure it changes with the times and the cohorts of children that run through our wonderful school. We want children to be fully immersed and part of their learning and remember their quality time at Athena.

We are proud of our cultural capital adaptations to the whole school curriculum in recent years. At Athena School, our curriculum is designed to instil high aspirations in all our children and to encourage them to become resilient, life-long learners who embrace challenges and continue to grow and develop their cultural capital. Our children will be inspired to follow whichever path they choose whilst being well-rounded, conscientious global citizens. Our 6C values, understanding of SMSC and British Values enrich and underpin our curriculum to ensure our pupils are prepared and equipped to succeed in their futures in an ever-changing world.



As a school we are refining our strategies to ensure Quality First Teaching. We follow the 3 waves of interventions model.



Below are the systems we have in place:

Improving Reading and Fluency

We support all students struggling with comprehension, fluency and vocabulary by the following targeted approaches:

Fresh Start RWI

Why we do it:

- Close reading gaps
- Empower students to access the wider curriculum with greater independence and success.



Accelerated Reader

Why we do it:

- The first EEF-funded efficacy trial of AR found pupils who received the programme made three months of additional progress in reading comprehension.

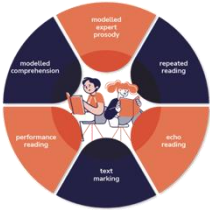


Renaissance
Accelerated Reader

Fluency Project

Why we do it:

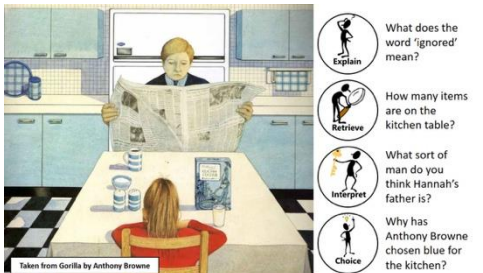
- For teachers to have knowledge and skills to support our pupils.



Read with ERIC

Why we do it:

- Explicitly target specific reading skills
- Exposure to new vocabulary



E-Reader Pens

Why we do it:

- To support those with dyslexia
- Promoting independence and autonomy





Stretch and Challenge

We support all students by ensuring stretch and challenge through:

Sparx Maths

What it is: Sparx Maths is an online platform that provides personalized mathematics homework for students aged 11-16. It uses a data-driven approach, including videos, practice questions, and spaced repetition, to create a tailored learning experience.

Why we do it: Sparx Maths incorporates strategies like spaced repetition and interleaving to enhance long-term memory and retention. The platform also provides practice questions that are challenging yet achievable, ensuring students are stretched and supported in their learning.



Sparx Maths

LBQ

What it is: *Learning By Questions (LbQ)* is a classroom app filled with curriculum-aligned Question Sets and immediate feedback to super-charge learning.

Why we do it: To enhance learning through immediate feedback and interactive questioning. It helps students engage with the material, identify knowledge gaps, and build confidence by providing personalized feedback after each question. Teachers can also use it to monitor student progress and identify areas where students need additional support.



RUBRICS

What it is: A RUBRIC is a set of criteria used to assess and evaluate the quality of student work, such as essays, projects, or presentations.

Why we do it: Rubrics can help clarify your expectations and will show students how to meet them, making students accountable for their performance in an easy-to-follow format.

Descriptive Writing:

Going for...	Feature	Student	Peer	Teacher
Green	Adjectives			
	Alliteration			
	Adverbs			
	Metaphor			
	Simile			
	Onomatopoeia			
Gold	Symbolism			
	Personification			
	Interesting verbs (synonyms)			



Critique

Why we do it: To help students develop a deeper understanding of their own work and the work of others, improve their critical thinking and communication skills, and foster a collaborative learning environment.



Gallery Walk

Why we do it: To actively engage students in learning, encourage critical thinking, and promote peer-to-peer interaction. By moving around the classroom to view and discuss different works or prompts, students gain multiple perspectives, receive feedback, and deepen their understanding of the material.



KWL grids

Why we do it: Guides students to formulate questions and seek answers, fostering curiosity and critical thinking.

Topic: _____		Date: _____
K k I Know	W What I Want to know	L What I Learned



Appendix:

Teach Like a Champion-Doug Lemov

Lemov researched and observed many “great” teachers (who, despite having pupils with additional needs or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, saw consistently high results each year) and found that all of them used simple but effective approaches, which ensured all of their pupils were engaged, learning and had high aspirations.

How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

Although there are currently around 63 techniques recommended, at its core, Teach Like A Champion promotes the following:

Setting high academic expectations

All pupils need to know that they can and will be made accountable, with a “no opt-out” policy and an insistence on fully correct responses rather than those that are partially thought through (Lemov insists that “right is right”).

Planning that ensures academic success

All teaching should start with the end and plan backwards effectively from there. Objectives should always be effective and every task should lead to an ultimate end goal of learning.

Focusing on engagement

Lemov recommends using a “hook” at the start of a lesson to spark interest, naming and sharing the “steps of learning” with pupils, and maintaining the focus of the whole class with techniques such as the “cold call”, where students are selected at random to answer questions.

Creating a strong classroom culture

According to Lemov, great teachers maintain control of their classes through consistent routines around elements such as entering and exiting the classroom, and even the transitions between tasks. Underpinning all of this is the “golden rule” that high standards are for 100 per cent of pupils, 100 per cent of the time.



How to Teach Like a Champ

11 Crucial Principles For High-Impact Teaching



READINGGRAPHICS
Ideas Come Alive

Cognitive Load Theory

‘Cognitive load’ is the amount of information our working memory can hold at any given time. The working memory is where we process information and is key to learning.

Three types of working memory

To support pupils to learn more effectively we want to reduce demand on pupils’ working memory. There are three types of working memory:

1. Intrinsic load: this means how complex a task is. If a task or problem is really complex, then it can take over most of our working memory. If a task is simple, it uses less working memory.
2. Extraneous load: these are the instructions you are given or how questions are written. Incomplete instructions take up space in working memory and don’t help you learn.
3. Germane load: this is the amount of work you put in to create a permanent store of knowledge.

Teachers can support pupils by reducing intrinsic load, reducing extraneous load and enhancing germane load.



How we at Athena support our pupils and promote their cognitive load:

Reducing Intrinsic and Extraneous Load	Enhancing Germane Load
1.Reduce the number of steps in instructions that are given at any one time 2. Refrain from giving multiple instructions verbally and/or once 3. Prevent complex challenges from overwhelming learners 4. Reduce the number of learning objectives or number of outcomes in one given lesson. 5. Refrain from giving children outcomes that are unachievable due to gaps in their learning 6. Provide as little visible wording as possible on screens and worksheets.	1.Break down tasks into manageable chunks 2. Have written instructions visible on paper or on PowerPoint lesson slide 3. Appropriately challenge pupils 4. Learners are aware of what they are expected to learn through learning objectives and success criteria. 5. Excluding the new task, ensure the requirements for the task has been retrieved in prior learning to ensure new learning is held in the working memory. 6. Ensure worksheets and slides are clear and to the point, by keeping distracting images/texts to a minimum.

- **A Constructivism Pedagogy**

Constructivism is a theory that people learn through experiences and reflection. A Constructivist pedagogy puts the child at the centre of the learning, and is sometimes called ‘invisible pedagogy’. A constructivist approach would incorporate project work, inquiry based learning, and might adopt a Montessori or Steiner method.

Constructivism is based on the pedagogical research of **Piaget (1896-1890)**. Piaget wrote extensively about ‘schemas’, an idea that learners come ready to learn, and the teacher must build activities to facilitate their learning. Younger children work things through physically, whereas older children tackle symbolic and abstract ideas.



A lesson might include individualisation, a slower pace, hidden outcomes, the mantle of the expert, and less teacher talk. Some adopters of this pedagogy would also place emphasis on being outdoors and engaging with nature.

How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

1. Use of UPSR in problem solving tasks
2. Praise and support the interest of pupil's questions and interests in tasks.
3. Tasks are based on building on what pupils already know.
4. Assessing prior knowledge and plenaries
5. Opportunities for group/paired work that is student led and based on cooperation.
6. Embedding learning in realistic contexts and authentic tasks (See cultural capital plan)
7. Encouraging the variety of modes for representation e.g., film, audio text, speakers, physical aids

• A Social Constructivism Pedagogy

A Social constructivism pedagogy could be considered to be a blend of two priorities: teacher guided, and student centred. Cognitive psychologist, Lev Vygotsky developed social constructivism, building on the work of Piaget.

The teacher would use group work elements, but would use smaller group sizes, and limit the choice in topics. The teacher might also use teacher modelling, questioning, and a mixture of individual, pair, and whole class instruction.

For children with SEMH needs, our main priority is to focus on – the motivation, the communication and interaction with other people, the skill of the teacher, for example. Responsive teaching strategies based on this approach typically focus on different aspects of teacher-pupil interaction, classroom dialogue, 'real' problem solving and practical classroom activities, pupil choice, and reflection on learning (Watson, 2001). Some social constructivist approaches explicitly hand over some of the teaching responsibilities to pupils via a process of modelling and guided practice (e.g. reciprocal teaching for developing reading comprehension in children at all levels of reading development (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994)

How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

1. Teachers question students' answers, without regard to whether they are right or wrong, to make sure the student has a good grasp of the concept.



2. Learners are challenged to perform open-ended investigations, working to solve problems with realistic and meaningful contexts.
3. Pupils are active in their learning and take part in student led activities and projects
4. Adults scaffold tasks to learners, maintaining pupil interest and giving support where needed to increase their knowledge and reasoning.
5. Providing field trips and outings to promote active social learning.
6. Pupils are giving tasks where they can use their experimentation and exploration skills e.g., science week, natural environment.

- **Executive Functioning and Metacognitive Skills**

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| ☐ Inhibition | |
| ☐ Shift | (Behavioural) |
| ☐ Initiation | |
| ☐ Working Memory | |
| ☐ Plan/Organise | |
| ☐ Organise Materials | (Cognitive) |
| ☐ Monitor | |
| ☐ Self-Monitoring | |
| ☐ Self-Regulation | (Emotional) |

- **Bloom's Taxonomy Theory and Metacognition**

Bloom's Taxonomy, (Benjamin Bloom, 1956), can be defined as an educational framework, a set of hierarchical models, or a tool for classifying learning objectives into different levels of complexity and specificity. The levels cover learning objectives in three domains – cognitive, affective, and sensory domain – out of which the first is most used in traditional education for structuring curriculums, assessments, and other evaluation strategies.

The way we support pupil's metacognition refers to their ability to plan, monitor, evaluate, and make changes to their own learning behaviours in order to confront challenges more effectively. This can be defined as 'thinking deeply about how one learns best', but the elements of active monitoring and modifying of thought processes make it much more than this. It is also a form of self-regulation, involving self-awareness, critical analysis skills, and the ability to problem-solve.

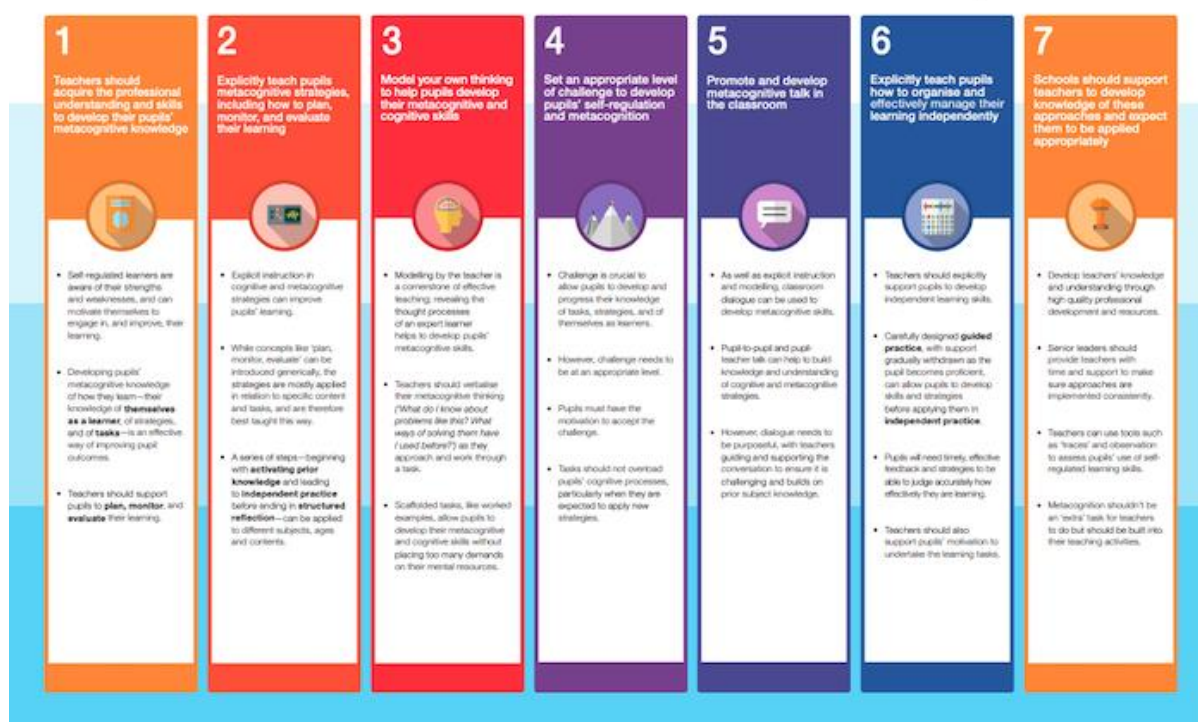


How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:



METACOGNITION AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

Summary of recommendations



1. Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge.

- CPD opportunities to update knowledge and skills.
- Subject Leaders in place
- Planning using strategies that works best for the teacher as well as pupils.
- Employing different learning styles to cater for all.
- Terminology is displayed in classrooms.

2. Explicitly teach pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

- RUBRICs
- Understand, Plan, Solve, Reflect (UPSR)
- KWL grids (what we already know (K), what we want to know (W), what we have learnt(L))
- Children have access to a wide variety of materials e.g., numicon, base10, dictionaries, displays.



- Following PEEL format in writing
- Self-evaluation – Traffic light system, thumbs up/thumbs down.
- Kind and Helpful Peer Assessing.
- Verbal feedback.
- Critique.
- Gallery Walks.
- Knowledge organisers
- Student questionnaires

3. Model your own thinking to help pupils develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills.

- Shared writing opportunities.
- Step by step modelling
- Text analysis- breaking down tasks into manageable chunks

4. Set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition.

- Verbal feedback during lesson to know how the pupil is accessing task.
- Pupils have multiple adults and peers to communicate with where appropriate during tasks.
- Tasks adapted appropriately for children's abilities.
- Structured formatting support resources

5. Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom.

- Teachers ask challenging questions.
- Verbal feedback
- Promoting dialogue
- Teachers to guide and probe thinking to the pupils about their upcoming learning e.g., what did you find tricky? What could go wrong during this task?
- Use of talking partners
- Debating tasks and scenarios
- Scaffolded questioning



6. Explicitly teach pupils how to organise, and effectively manage, their learning independently

- Pupils can make active choices on how they achieve the same outcome e.g. a strategy that works for them best
- 'Pole Star' pit stops that are student led
- Problem Solving Tasks using UPSR
- Use of knowledge organisers to re-visit key concepts.
- Pupils can restructure their physical and/or social context for compatibility e.g. sitting in a group, working with a peer, holding a sensory toy.
- Self-marking
- Modelling and using supportive resources to support independent learning.

7. Schools should support teachers to develop their knowledge of these approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately.

- Strategies displayed clearly in the classrooms.
- CPD opportunities
- Regular staff meetings
- Time for implementation to work and have an effect on pupils.