

How We Challenge Pupils in Lessons

In our recent parent survey, 88% of parents agreed that their child is sufficiently challenged in lessons. We want to share how challenge works in our classrooms and why our approach is based on strong educational research, to help parents better understand how pupils are challenged in their learning.

Our Approach: Mastery Learning

We follow a mastery approach to the curriculum. This means:

- Getting the answer 'right' is not always the end goal – mistakes help children learn
- Every child secures a deep understanding of key concepts before moving on.
- We do not challenge by giving 'harder' tasks or rushing pupils to the next topic.
- Instead, we broaden and deepen learning within the same concept.

Why? Research shows that when pupils move on before mastering the basics, gaps in understanding grow over time. Mastery learning ensures strong foundations and long-term success. Studies confirm that mastery-based classrooms improve achievement, retention, and confidence for all learners.

How Do We Provide Challenge?

Challenge is about thinking harder, not doing more. In lessons, teachers use strategies such as:

- Probing Questions – Asking pupils to explain their reasoning, justify answers, and consider alternative approaches.
- Adding Depth – Encouraging pupils to connect ideas, apply concepts in new contexts, and use precise vocabulary.
- Extending Through Discussion – Pupils debate, compare methods, and reflect on misconceptions.

Research shows that effective questioning boosts engagement, critical thinking, and deeper understanding. It turns passive learning into active problem-solving.

What Does This Look Like in Practice?

In maths: Instead of moving to harder questions, pupils might be asked, *'Can you explain why this method works? Can you find another way?'*

In writing: *'How could you make this sentence more precise? What effect does that choice have?'*

These approaches help pupils think deeply, not just finish quickly.

Benefits for Your Child

- **Stronger Foundations:** No gaps in core knowledge.
- **Higher Confidence:** Pupils feel secure before moving on.
- **Better Thinking Skills:** Explaining and reasoning develop critical thinking.
- **Long-Term Success:** Research shows mastery learning leads to higher achievement and enjoyment of learning.



How Can Parents & Carers Help?

- Ask your child to explain their thinking when they share homework.
- Praise effort and reasoning, not just speed or 'getting it right.'
- Encourage curiosity: 'Why do you think that works?'

If you have any follow-up questions about your child's learning, or want to find out more about how your child is being challenged, please talk to your child's class teacher.