



Lexicon for Learning policy

February 2024

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Sandcross Primary School - Inclusive Language Policy

Introduction - Context

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.” Anthony J. D’Angelo

At Sandcross Primary School, we recognise that language shapes the learning environment and influences the attitudes of pupils, staff, parents, governors, trustees, and visitors. Our commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive culture is grounded in the understanding that every word and action sends a powerful message, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and others.

Research and Links to Further Reading

To deepen our understanding, we draw upon research from educational psychologists such as Carol Dweck, Ellen Langer, and Martin Seligman. For further exploration, consider these resources:

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.

“Research shows that the language we use to talk about education and learning deeply affects how individuals see themselves as learners. Even something as simple as changing ‘is’ to ‘could’ or talking about ‘learning’ rather than ‘work’ makes a difference.”

Langer, E. J. (1989). *Mindfulness*.

“Small shifts in a teacher’s language can induce marked shifts in the learning habits that pupils develop. e.g. if you say definitely that something is the case, pupils will take it literally and try to remember it. If you say of the same thing that it ‘could be’ the case, they become more engaged, more thoughtful, more imaginative and more critical. That ‘could be’ invites pupils to learn more actively and inquisitively. Pupils will question and solve problems more readily if knowledge is presented to them as being provisional.”

Langer found that when she probed their understanding with more creative and open-ended questions, ‘could be’ pupils far out-performed their ‘is’ peers.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*.

“Toxic words like ‘never’ and ‘always’ can be damaging to learners in certain circumstances. If a student says “I can never understand this type of problem” or “Maths is always too hard for me” this displays a lack of optimism and grit. Likewise, if a teacher says “You are always distracted” or “You never complete your homework” it implies a lack of faith in the student to grow as a learner.”

The word “work” has a similarly toxic effect. At Sandcross, we talk about “learning” rather than “work”, and of “independent learning” rather than “homework” (research by Ellen Langer and Sophia Snow has shown that changing such terminology has a positive effect on how learners perceive tasks).

Our responses to children, Carl Rogers (1957) notes, should show complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person says or does (Unconditional Positive Regard).

A: Growth Mindset Language

The language of ability and labelling pupils as high or low ability, top set or bottom set, or gifted or talented goes against the concept of growth mindset as developed by Carol Dweck.

At Sandcross, we talk in terms of prior attainment and current performance rather than ability, in the

belief that everyone can improve on their scores, has the potential to grow their mind and that human qualities (including intellectual skills) can be cultivated by effort and application.

As staff we believe in pupils' potential to grow their intelligence and we speak the language of growth mindset. We ask How can I teach this concept to this student? rather than Can I teach this concept to this student? We ask 'How will they learn this best?' rather than 'Can they learn this?'

At Sandcross, we refrain from using terms like "SEND pupils" or "EAL pupils" to emphasise inclusivity because these labels may inadvertently contribute to a sense of categorisation and otherness. Such terms can lead to stereotyping and may reinforce the perception that pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are somehow separate or different from their peers. The goal is to promote an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all pupils are seen as part of the broader school community.

Instead of using labels that focus on differences, schools can adopt person-first language or alternative terminology that emphasises the individual over their characteristics. For example:

1. Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN):
 - Instead of "SEN pupils," use "pupils with special educational needs" or "pupils with additional learning needs."
 - This places the emphasis on the student first, acknowledging their unique needs without defining them solely by those needs.
2. English as an Additional Language (EAL):
 - Instead of "EAL pupils," use "pupils with English as an Additional Language" or "pupils learning English as an additional language."
 - This wording highlights the language aspect without categorizing or labeling the pupils.
3. Neurodivergent Pupils:
 - Instead of "SEND," use "neurodivergent" to encompass a range of learning differences and abilities.
 - This term promotes the understanding that neurological differences are a natural part of human diversity.

Using person-first language or alternative terms helps create a more inclusive and respectful learning environment. It reinforces the idea that every student is an individual with unique strengths and challenges, rather than defining them solely by a particular characteristic or need. Additionally, it contributes to fostering a positive and supportive school culture where diversity is celebrated, and all pupils feel valued and included.

We also recognise the importance of open communication with how members of our community prefer to categorise themselves. Through our value of respect, we understand that it is important to have that open dialogue. An example of this would be autism, where medical practitioners use the letters ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder); where some outside of the medical profession would use ASC (Autistic Spectrum Condition); and where others including the National Autistic Society would use autistic. Involving the person in this conversation so as to best understand how they see themselves is best practice and recognising that, over time, their views may change.

As staff we emphasise in our language and behaviour that making mistakes is a natural and important part of the learning process: learning from mistakes is what learning is all about. It is important that as adults we talk about our learning mistakes and how we put them right.

Evidence shows that the pupils of adults who preach and practise a growth mindset perform considerably better than those taught by adults who believe in fixed intelligence. The fixed mindset limits achievement.

B: Language of Praise and Encouragement

Praise is approached with careful consideration at Sandcross Primary School. We recognise the impact of appropriate praise on motivation and affirming pupils' efforts. Feedback emphasises effort rather than inherent abilities, aligning with our growth mindset values.

'The wrong kind of praise leads kids down the path of entitlement, dependence and fragility. The right kind of praise can lead them down the path of hard work and greater hardiness. With the right kind of feedback even adults (!) can be motivated to choose challenging tasks and confront their mistakes.' - Carol Dweck.

Teachers' feedback should avoid praising "ability" because focusing on inherent abilities can inadvertently foster a fixed mindset and hinder pupils' motivation and resilience.

1. Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset:
 - Praising ability can reinforce a fixed mindset, where pupils believe their intelligence or talents are fixed traits. This mindset may lead pupils to avoid challenges, fearing that failure reflects on their inherent abilities.
2. Risk of Limiting Potential:
 - When pupils are praised for being "smart" or "talented," they may develop a fear of making mistakes or taking on challenging tasks. They might prefer tasks where they can easily demonstrate their perceived ability, avoiding opportunities for growth.
3. Impact on Resilience:
 - Pupils praised for their ability may become more focused on maintaining a positive image rather than embracing challenges and learning from setbacks. This can undermine their resilience and ability to navigate difficulties in their academic journey.
4. Short-Term Boost, Long-Term Consequences:
 - Praising ability may provide a short-term confidence boost, but it often comes with negative consequences in the long run. When faced with challenges, pupils praised for ability may be less likely to persist, fearing that failure could damage their perceived intelligence.
5. Fixed Mindset and Performance Anxiety:
 - Pupils with a fixed mindset may experience anxiety when faced with tasks that they believe directly measure their abilities. The fear of not meeting expectations can lead to performance anxiety and a reluctance to engage in tasks that challenge their perceived level of ability.
6. Emphasising Effort Encourages Growth:
 - Shifting the focus from ability to effort encourages a growth mindset. When pupils receive feedback that acknowledges their effort, strategies, and improvement, they are more likely to view challenges as opportunities for learning and growth.
7. Promoting Intrinsic Motivation:
 - Praising effort and the process of learning fosters intrinsic motivation. Pupils become more motivated by the joy of learning and the satisfaction of overcoming challenges rather than seeking external validation for their perceived abilities.
8. Encouraging a Love for Learning:
 - By praising effort and the learning process, teachers contribute to creating a positive learning environment where pupils develop a genuine love for learning. This approach supports a culture where curiosity and exploration are valued.

In summary, avoiding praise based on ability helps cultivate a growth mindset, resilience, and intrinsic motivation among pupils. It encourages them to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes,

and see learning as a continuous journey rather than a fixed destination.

To further reinforce the importance of effort, we incorporate Doug Lemov's approach, praising pupils for their effort without confusing it with mastery. Our aim is to motivate pupils to take on challenging tasks and confront mistakes with a positive attitude.

C: Language of Aspiration

Staff members communicate high expectations and aspirations through language that encourages pupils to consider who they are becoming. We avoid limiting language, allowing pupils to explore their potential without constraints. Teachers may use phrases like "You sounded like a university seminar group" to inspire aspirations.

D: Language of Character

Respect: Self-Reflection:

- How does your work demonstrate respect for the task at hand?
- In what ways have you shown respect for your peers' ideas or contributions during this assignment?

Responsibility: Accountability for Learning:

- How have you taken responsibility for your own learning during this project?
- Can you identify areas where you can take more responsibility to enhance the quality of your work?

Resilience: Overcoming Challenges:

- Describe a challenge you faced while working on this task. How did you overcome it?
- How has resilience played a role in your approach to learning from your mistakes?

Kindness: Collaboration and Empathy:

- How have you demonstrated kindness in your interactions with classmates during group activities?
- Reflect on a time when you showed empathy toward someone who was struggling with their work.

Growth Mindset: Effort and Growth:

- How has your effort contributed to your understanding of the subject matter?
- Can you identify a concept where your mindset shifted from "I can't" to "I can with effort"?

High Expectations: Setting High Standards:

- What standards have you set for yourself in this assignment, and how do they align with high expectations?
- In what ways can you challenge yourself to go beyond the basic requirements of the task?

High-Quality and Effective Learning: Utilising Resources:

- How have you engaged with the resources provided to support your learning?
- Can you identify areas where seeking additional support or resources might enhance your

understanding?

Learning is Exciting and Challenging: Embracing Challenges:

- Describe a part of the assignment that you found challenging. How did this challenge contribute to your overall learning experience?
- In what ways can you make challenging tasks more exciting for yourself?

Well-Rounded Individuals: Balancing Skills and Interests:

- Reflect on how this task has allowed you to showcase a range of skills and interests.
- How can you integrate different aspects of your personality into future assignments?

Being 'Secondary Ready': Preparation for Future Learning:

- In what ways do the skills you are developing now contribute to your readiness for secondary education?
- How can you apply what you've learned in this task to future challenges?

Wider Contribution: Contributing to Excellence:

- Reflect on how your work contributes to the reputation of our school as a center of excellence.
- How can you continue to uphold high standards in future, school-wide projects, such as through pupil parliament?

Inspire Lifelong Success: Linking Learning to Lifelong Success:

- Consider how the skills and knowledge you are gaining in this task contribute to your lifelong success.
- How does this assignment align with the vision of inspiring lifelong success?

These questions are designed to encourage self-reflection, metacognition, and a growth mindset while aligning with the values and drivers of Sandcross Primary School. They aim to empower pupils to take ownership of their learning, embrace challenges, and develop into well-rounded individuals prepared for future success.

E: Language of Respect and Inclusion

Our school community, diverse in backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures, is built on a foundation of respect and inclusion. Discriminatory language is not tolerated, and it is an expectation that all members challenge such instances appropriately.

We adhere to an agreed set of terminology, emphasising respect for all individuals. Terms are used carefully, including gender-neutral alternatives, recognising diversity and promoting inclusivity.

We believe it's essential to use inclusive and respectful language. We use:

- Pupils, Learners, Members (of Pupil Parliament), School Captains and Vice Captains, or Young Individuals (rather than defining gender)
- Individuals from Diverse Backgrounds, only emphasising specific ethnicities when relevant
- Pupils with Additional Educational Requirements or Diverse Learning Needs when discussing pupils with additional learning needs
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Native English Speakers and English Language Learners when discussing pupils learning English as an additional language

- Pupils in Need of Free School Meals and Pupils Not Requiring Free School Meals

It's important to consider and confirm language use in other potentially controversial areas as well:

Gender Pronouns: Use gender-neutral terms where possible. Allow individuals to express their preferred pronouns.

Family Structures: Recognise and celebrate diverse family structures without assuming a nuclear family model.

Religious Diversity: Be respectful of various religious beliefs and practices. Avoid assumptions about a person's religion.

Sexuality and Relationships: Be inclusive and avoid assumptions about individuals' sexual orientations or relationship statuses.

Body Image and Appearance: Promote positive body image and avoid language that may contribute to stereotypes or body shaming.

Socioeconomic Status: Be sensitive to differences in economic backgrounds including those in receipt of pupil premium funding without stigmatising or making assumptions about individuals.

Cultural Sensitivity: Emphasise cultural appreciation and understanding, avoiding stereotypes or generalisations.

Mental Health: Use language that destigmatises mental health issues, fostering a supportive and understanding environment.

Learning and Achievement: Acknowledge diverse learning styles and celebrate various forms of achievement beyond academic success.

Sandcross will continually assess and update our language use, ensuring it reflects an inclusive and respectful environment for all members of the school community. Regular training and open communication will contribute to a culture of understanding and acceptance.

Alignment with School Values, Curriculum Drivers, and Vision

This inclusive language policy is firmly grounded in our core values of Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, and Kindness. It aligns seamlessly with our curriculum drivers (oneness, diversity, interdependence, health, cycle, and adaptation) and fulfills our school vision: to inspire lifelong success and develop well-rounded, confident citizens.

Implementation and Continuous Improvement

Regular reflection and feedback sessions will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of this policy. Ongoing professional development opportunities will be provided to ensure all stakeholders are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement inclusive language practices.

By adopting this Inclusive Language Policy, Sandcross Primary School commits to creating an educational environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and encouraged to reach their full potential.