



Thorndown Pre-School

Growth Mindset Policy

Our aspiration is that Thorndown Primary will be an outstanding school.

We value and respect everyone in our community and work as a team to:

- Provide learning experiences which support and inspire high achievement for all;
- Ensure a caring, safe and welcoming environment;
- Promote co-operative and responsible attitudes to make a positive contribution;
- Actively encourage independence and confidence to thrive in a changing world.

Approved at Learning & Development committee meeting on: 10 March 2022

Review Period: Annually

Date for next review: Spring 2023

Rationale

At Thorndown, we have high expectations for our pupils and aim that children achieve the best they can, within an environment which both supports and challenges them. We aim that our children are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements. One of the ways in which we achieve this is by promoting a growth mindset culture. Growth mindset describes a way of viewing challenges and setbacks and the belief that one's abilities and skills can be developed through dedication and hard work.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure a consistency of approach across the school, in order to promote a growth mindset culture through our use of language, by modelling and managing behaviour, and by organising teaching and learning. This includes the teaching, learning and assessment of learning attitudes, which aim to help us all to think about our learning more explicitly. This meta-cognitive approach teaches pupils specific strategies to set goals, and monitor and evaluate their own development.

What is a growth mindset?

A mindset is a belief about yourself and your basic qualities such as your intelligence, your talents and your personality. Research in the field of motivation has led to the creation the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset to describe the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence. When children believe that their abilities and intelligence are not fixed traits, they understand that effort makes them stronger. This belief can have a very positive effect on resilience and achievement.

What is the difference between a Fixed and Growth Mindset?

Research suggests that students who have a fixed mindset believe that their basic abilities, their intelligence and their talents are fixed traits. Students with this fixed mindset who feel that they are not smart, tend to believe that there is no point in working hard as they don't have the ability to improve and get better, whilst students who believe that they are clever, often tend to avoid challenges. If faced with a task they expect to be able to do, but can't, this can destroy their self-esteem and so they tend to prefer to do less risky tasks about which they feel confident. Conversely, students with a growth mindset understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone is the same, but they believe that everyone can get better if they work on it. They tend to view challenge in a much more positive light and have greater resilience.

Common characteristics associated with fixed and growth mindsets are summarised below.

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Intelligence is static.	Intelligence can be developed.
Leads to a desire to <i>look smart</i> and therefore a tendency to	Leads to a desire to <i>learn</i> and therefore a tendency to
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• avoid challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• embrace challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• give up easily due to obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• persist despite obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• see effort as fruitless	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• see effort as path to mastery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ignore useful feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• learn from criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be threatened by others' success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be inspired by others' success

Learning Environment and Culture

Each class creates an environment in which growth mindset messages are promoted and where children feel safe to take risks and make mistakes.

The language we use with our children is very important. We give praise for persistence, effort and resilience, rather than for being 'clever'. Wherever possible, praise highlights the effort, skill, process or attitude, rather than the person. We also aware that most of us have a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets, and that we are all on a journey towards a having growth mindset.

Organisation

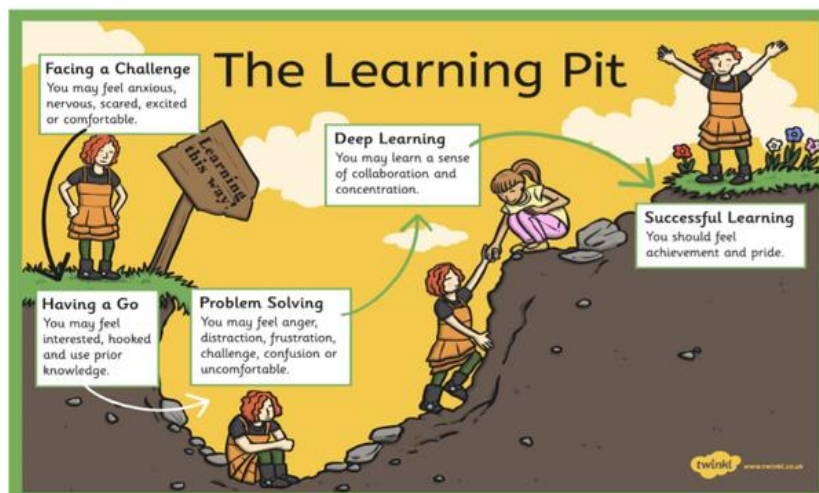
When children are placed in a 'lower ability' or 'middle ability' group, this can encourage the child to have lower expectations of him/herself. Children are often aware of where they are in relation to the rest of the class and therefore will vary their aspirations accordingly, thus undermining their growth mindset. Their access to higher order thinking, language and activities can potentially be limited by this approach.

At Thorndown, we keep groupings flexible and aim for all children to be active and influential participants within the classroom. Children often work collaboratively in mixed attainment pairings and small groups. In this way, we have found that children learn from each other and challenge themselves more. They understand that being able to explain learning to a peer will, in fact, enhance their own learning. They place fewer limits on their learning and have higher expectations of what they can achieve. This, consequently, has improved the attainment of all our pupils.

Teaching approaches

At Thorndown, contributions from **all** children are valued. We endeavour to foster a culture whereby children feel proud of their achievements and understand that making mistakes is a crucial part of learning, as is the improvement of their work.

Children are encouraged to be active learners and take responsibility for their own progress. In order to learn, we need to be challenged and embrace struggle. We often use the analogy of the 'learning pit' to help children talk about where they are in their learning journey. We know that facing difficulties can be very unsettling for children and can undermine self-esteem, but it is essential that we don't shy away from challenging tasks and we talk about the need to **be comfortable with being uncomfortable**.



Teachers, and the children themselves, are able to identify when further input is needed and hold mini teaching sessions within lessons to support learning and help children out of the 'pit'.

We also talk about the fact that, rather than not being able to do something, we "**can't do it yet.**" This encourages perseverance and a sense of pride in their achievements.

Without a positive, growth mindset, mistakes can be a source of upset. Children may want to give up and can be discouraged from taking on challenging tasks. However, at Thorndown, potential misconceptions and errors are carefully thought about when teachers plan lessons, and mistakes are used as learning points within lessons. Research has also shown that when reactions to mistakes are positive within the classroom, children will increase their efforts. In these ways, we create a culture in which mistakes are positively viewed and necessary for learning, and that failure is not a negative, undermining judgement on them as people, but as something they can learn from so that they can succeed in the future.

Our growth mindset culture is reinforced through the use of lessons and assemblies, when we teach children about recent brain science. This has shown that when mistakes occur, brain synapses fire, connections are made and brains 'grow'.

Children learn that their brain can be developed like a muscle which can change and grow stronger the more it is used. Children know that with time, effort, practice and input they can increase their proficiency. Teachers know that with time, effort, practice and the right support, **ALL** children can achieve.

Appropriate, targeted adult support can have a significant impact on learning. However, if not managed reflectively, it can also have a significant impact on attitudes towards oneself as a learner, and on independent learning, Children can become dependent on adult support. At Thorndown, support staff work with **all** children. Both teachers **and** support staff promote independence and resilience.

Rewards are used at Thorndown for a wide range of reasons, such as promoting good behaviour and to recognise achievement and effort. Friday celebration assemblies provide an opportunity for children to be rewarded for showing behaviours which demonstrate a growth mindset. This is evident in the reasons for which pupils receive a Headteacher's award.

Parents need to be clear about what we mean by a growth mindset, how we promote it at school and how they can support it at home. All parents are given a leaflet as a guide to the promotion of growth mindset in their Welcome to Thorndown parent pack.