



# Learning together for life



Join us on  
a life-changing  
journey



We're enabling members  
of our community  
to become creative,  
considerate, curious and  
courageous learners,  
capable of working  
independently and in  
partnership with others.



“

*We must remember that we are preparing children  
not simply for employment... and for the contribution  
they can make to the common good... but for the  
difficult decisions they will have to make in their  
personal lives, in those moments when they  
have to take responsibility for themselves...*

”

*Michael Morpurgo, Dimbleby Lecture, February 15th 2011*

# Personal responsibility: our vision



**The core guiding principle that lies at the heart of everything we do at South Dartmoor Community College is to encourage and develop personal responsibility among all members of our community.**

We believe in empowering students to take control of their own learning and their own lives so they know how to make good choices and also have the ability to thrive in a fast moving, ever changing world.

As the Chinese proverb says, “Give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he’ll eat forever.” At South Dartmoor, we would also add, “Empower him to be a learner and he will develop ever more effective ways to fish!”

It is critical that students develop their capacity to learn, both independently and in collaboration with others, and that they contribute to our community as well as benefit from it. Therefore, our role as educators is to:

- help students develop effective *learning habits*, which will give them the tools, confidence and flexibility to cope in many different and difficult situations
- nurture students’ emotional intelligence - in other words, their ability to function effectively in social situations because they not only know and understand how to manage themselves, but are also sensitive to the needs of others.

In order to achieve these goals, we have developed six key approaches to learning that are used consistently and creatively across our community and which, collectively, we refer to as *building learning power*.

On the following pages, we give you an insight into what we mean by *building learning power* and the learning approaches that underpin it. These approaches are helping us to maximise every student’s achievements, supported and encouraged by parents and carers, staff and governors.

By creating a learning environment that has high expectations of everyone - and by modelling the behaviour that we expect from our students - we can provide the stepping-stones that bring dreams closer to reality.

**This booklet is for all of us as we learn together.**



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hugh Bellamy".

Hugh Bellamy  
Principal, South Dartmoor Community College

# 6

## key approaches to learning

At South Dartmoor, we have researched widely and collaborated with other education professionals to help us produce a framework for learning that we call *building learning power*.

This framework is enabling members of our community to become creative, considerate, curious and courageous learners, capable of working independently and with others.

There are six key approaches that we use to help build our students' capacity to learn and we explain each of these in more detail in the following pages.



Coaching



Planning for  
Progress



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Power

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# Building learning power

## Learning is for life, not just for school

**Building learning power is a primary focus for our community because we believe that learning is for life, not just for school. We want young people to develop both an appetite and ability to learn that stays with them for the rest of their lives, and which enables them to respond positively and robustly to whatever challenges life may throw at them.**

Success lies in students developing *learning habits* which become so ingrained that, instead of giving up or stumbling at the first hurdle, they have the resilience and resourcefulness to approach problems or uncertainty in a calm, confident and creative way. You can read more about learning habits, and why we feel they're crucial to students' progress, overleaf.

### What's the big idea?

**Building learning power is...**

- Creating better life chances for young people
- Based on a belief that the habit of learning can be learned
- Helping everyone in our community to take personal responsibility for their lives and learning

Our whole community – students, staff, parents, Governors – is engaged in *building learning power* because it is a tried and tested way of improving young people's ability to manage their emotions, social situations, their thinking and how they reflect on and learn from their experiences.

**“ At South Dartmoor lessons are devised to encourage students to hypothesise, make connections, develop ideas and present their thinking in original ways... students work out things for themselves... the very best lessons are planned to enable students to direct much of their own learning.”**

Graham Powell, Principal Education Consultant,  
The Learning Organisation

### Try this...

Teachers and parents: try praising young people for the effort they put in and how they have tried to tackle a problem. Don't praise them for being smart and getting things 'right'.

# Learning habits



## Like riding a bike...

### Developing learning habits

Learning is like riding a bike, once you get the hang of it, you never forget how to do it. Of course, learning doesn't always come easily, it takes perseverance and, as Winston Churchill said, you must '**never, never, never give up**' if you want to achieve your goals.

At South Dartmoor we believe one of the keys to becoming a successful learner is to develop good *learning habits* that, with lots of practice, become second nature. For example, top class learners are in the habit of:

- **Persevering** – they never, never, never give up in the face of difficulties
- **Being curious** – they ask questions and see the connections between things
- **Working well with other people** – they learn from others and help others learn
- **Reflecting on what they're doing** – they make flexible plans and keep them under review

Our students are given the opportunity to stretch their learning muscles and build their strength as learners, not just in lessons but also in activities that take place beyond the normal school day. By helping them to adopt good learning habits we also enable them to understand and experience how they learn. Once they know **how** they learn best, they can also see **how** to improve and make progress.

Developing effective learning habits makes us more determined, ambitious and flexible thinkers, as well as more adaptable in the workplace and more successful in our personal lives.

### Learning to learn

- We all need to learn how to break the habit of depending on others to do things for us
- Our goal should be to take responsibility for ourselves whether we're working independently or in collaboration with others.
- Understanding and adopting good *learning habits* can help us get the best from ourselves

**“Now that I'm preparing for exams I feel really well equipped to meet coursework deadlines and manage my time effectively. The College has taught me to take responsibility for myself and know how best to learn.”**

Student at South Dartmoor

### Try this...

Teachers: try running lessons where all students can get involved in discussions without needing to put their hand up.

# Growth mindset



## Balloons, not buckets

### Encouraging a growth mindset

There are two ways to view our minds:

- As **buckets** – with a limited capacity; once they're full, they're full
- As **balloons** – that can continue to expand and grow

Carol Dweck, world-renowned Professor of Psychology at Stanford University in the USA, refers to balloon-minded people as having a *growth mindset*, while bucket-minded people have a *fixed mindset*.

At South Dartmoor, rather than just 'teaching to the test' and filling students' minds up with 'stuff' so they can pass exams, we believe everyone's learning capacity has the potential to expand and grow like a balloon. Helping young people to develop a growth mindset not only leads to exam success, but it continues to stretch our most able students and raises the bar for those who are apparently 'less able'.

By providing students with a secure framework in which they can take risks, experiment and learn, they can develop growth mindsets and surprise even themselves with the progress they make. To facilitate their progress we also have a concerted approach to giving praise and feedback.

- We value and praise the *effort, commitment and strategies* that students use when addressing challenges and problems, and not merely the outcomes they achieve
- We are specific and realistic in our feedback on performance.

### Learners with a **FIXED** mindset believe...

- Their ability is fixed and immovable
- That what they can achieve is limited
- In playing safe
- Making mistakes is a sign of weakness
- It's easier to give in when the pressure is on
- It's other people's fault when things go wrong
- They're unworthy or not good enough
- That it's ok to be dishonest about their feelings

### Learners with a **GROWTH** mindset believe...

- Their ability is expandable
- In exploring all possibilities
- That learning should be experimental and risky
- That learning from mistakes is vitally important
- That setbacks improve resilience and determination
- In taking responsibility for their thoughts and actions
- In learning from others
- They should accept their weaknesses and build on them

# Coaching



## Helping people to help themselves

### Using coaching to improve performance

Have you ever watched ‘Sports Personality of the Year’? The winners almost always thank their coaches, saying they could never have achieved so much without them. This is no doubt true but, nevertheless, it’s the individual sportsmen and women that sweated the hard stuff on the way to achieving their best performances. With the help of a coach, they worked out what they needed to do to improve and reached their goals through hard work, application and practice.

As a sports college, South Dartmoor is no stranger to coaching. We use and value it as a method of assuring progress and *building learning power*, not just in our sporting activities but across the curriculum.

We train and encourage staff, parents and students to adopt coaching techniques and engage in ‘learning conversations’ in order to help others to help themselves. If you could see yourself as a coach or you’d like to learn how to coach your child at home and improve their learning power, we’d love to hear from you.

### Try this...

Teachers and parents: encourage students to visualise their goals clearly before helping them to identify the first steps they need to take, on the way to their achievement.

**“Coaching has taken away the guilt I used to feel if my children hadn’t completed their home learning – it has enabled me to help them take on that responsibility, instead of trying to do it for them.”**

Parent at South Dartmoor

**“I have found that a deeper understanding of coaching conversations has allowed my students to take ownership of their learning. I have become a facilitator of their learning and in so doing students are more independent... they take greater responsibility and more creative risks.”**

Teacher at South Dartmoor

# Planning for progress

## Knowing what to do next

### Planning, doing, reviewing

Jean Piaget, a renowned developmental psychologist, defined intelligence as, “knowing what to do when you don’t know what to do.”

In other words, if we are to equip young people with the skills to cope whenever they face problems and uncertainty, it’s important that we train them to reflect on what they need to do, before they do it. Reflecting and planning is all part of the process of improving.

At South Dartmoor, we build students’ capacity to improve and work independently by encouraging them to:

- distil their thinking *before* they start a piece of work
- develop a *flexible* plan and keep it constantly under review
- continually revise their work as they go along

## Try this...

Parents: when your children get stuck, encourage them to walk away, then come back and plan their ideas, take their time, reflect on how they’re getting on and be prepared to adapt and change what they have done.



To support student progress, teachers review individual learning and provide constructive feedback using a variety of methods, including marking, questioning and regular learning conversations. We call this assessment *for learning* because it not only helps students to understand WHAT they need to improve but also HOW to improve.

# Planning for progress

How do learners know they are making progress? What does progress look like? How can learners be helped and encouraged to improve their performance?

Questions like these led us to develop the PLANNING FOR PROGRESS ARROW.

This is a tool kit that supports teachers in their planning for student progress. As you can see, many of the learning approaches we have introduced in this booklet have a role to play in this toolkit. By using it consistently, across the College, we are helping students to set their learning targets, plan for progress and continuously improve. That way they can achieve their aspirations and realise their potential.



Teachers use quality information about their students to inform their planning

**Quality information**

Teachers and students have regular learning conversations that provide individuals with feedback

**Learning conversations**

**Assessment**

Students' learning is assessed with them and by them so they know what to do to continuously improve

# Try this...

Teachers and parents: see how we improve learning with our interactive Planning for Progress Arrow.

Visit <http://southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk/about/learning-and-teaching/planning-for-progress>

Students and teachers adopt a questioning frame of mind to improve learning

Questioning

Relationships

Relationships based on trust, openness and honesty ensure that progress is maintained

## Lesson performance

Progress is assured by everyone taking personal responsibility for learning

The arrow supports our students to become creative, considerate, curious and courageous learners, capable of working independently and with others.



# Student voice

## Shaping our own future

### Giving students a voice

Students are at the centre of everything we do in college, so it makes sense to ask them to contribute to all parts of college life.

Giving them a voice helps to develop their self-worth and encourages them to be leaders, offering up ideas and suggestions and taking personal responsibility for shaping learning in our community.

### How we encourage student involvement...

#### In classes:

- Developing real teams with roles for every student
- Encouraging students to feed back to each other using supportive language
- Asking students what they need to learn about a new module
- Involving students in creating modules of work or in teaching lessons

#### As a college:

- Inviting students to join Learning Councils
- Involving them in reviewing departments
- Giving them a role in appointing new teachers
- Enabling them to help shape the curriculum and environment
- Asking them to take leading roles in organising and running college events

All of these opportunities and activities give students a powerful voice that leads to development and change, driven by learners themselves.

“ Being on the Learning council has helped me to be more confident with who I am. ”  
Student at South Dartmoor

“ Since joining the Learning Council, my child has gained a greater level of respect and responsibility towards her studies. ”  
Parent at South Dartmoor

“ We really appreciate having feedback from our students and it will help sharpen our practice with regard to learning habits and peer assessment. ”  
Teacher at South Dartmoor



# Behaviour for learning



## Showing respect. Taking responsibility.

### Managing behaviour for learning

Fostering an atmosphere in college where everyone feels respected, safe and happy allows students to learn more successfully. Students are expected to take personal responsibility for their behaviour, to respect other learners and the spaces in which we all work.

In order to develop students' ability to manage their own behaviour, we take restorative approaches to learning – in other words, we help individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves and their emotions, as well as the impact they have on others.

Ultimately the aim is to enable all students to focus on the real reason for attending college: making progress in their learning.

### How we encourage behaviour for learning...

#### In classes, students:

- Adopt learning habits that develop social skills, such as listening to and understanding other people's views
- Take personal responsibility for learning as an individual and in teams
- Take personal responsibility for behaviour and attitude to learning
- Help others in the classroom shine and make progress

#### As a college, we:

- Use restorative approaches to help students understand emotions and improve social interactions
- Use restorative approaches to solve conflict situations through discussion
- Encourage a sense of belonging to our community

These approaches not only create a sense of social harmony and belonging in college, but are also improving students' ability to form positive social and personal relationships which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

One school cannot change the world but it can help individuals improve the world in which they operate by encouraging reflective, empathetic learning habits and behaviour.



*It was like a weight lifted from my shoulders.  
We would call each other names and be mean to each other.  
Since our restorative approaches meeting we have been fine  
and get along.*

Student at South Dartmoor



Help us to foster a

# love of learning



We're passionate about *learning together* in order to make a difference.

Whether you're a member of our community, or part of a wider national or international community, please contact us if you'd like to know more – or if you feel you may have a positive contribution to make.

**Join us on a life-changing, learning journey.**

Tel: 01364 652230

Email: [enquiries@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk)

Visit: [www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk](http://www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk)

## Try this...

The book list below features some of the inspirational thinking that supports our key approaches to learning at South Dartmoor Community College. If you're interested to find out more, why not try some further reading?

**The Learning Powered School: Pioneering 21st Century Education**  
Guy Claxton, Maryl Chambers, Graham Powell and Bill Lucas  
Published by TLO Limited, 2011  
ISBN: 9781901219548

**Mindset: The New Psychology of Success**  
Carol S. Dweck  
Published by Ballantine Books, 2008  
ISBN: 9780345472328

**Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others**  
James Flaherty  
Published by Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010  
ISBN: 9781856178167

“

*If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning. That way they will have a life long way to build and repair their own confidence.*

”

*Carol Dweck, Mindset*

