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Report following the analysis and evaluation of evidence submitted by Penbridge Junior School for the purpose of reaccreditation as an Advanced Thinking School by Thinking Schools @Exeter, University of Exeter.

Evidence base

The criteria for accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School starts from the assumption that all the criteria for the first level of accreditation by Thinking Schools@Exeter continue to be met within the ongoing practices of the community. The second level of evaluation further assumes that the original criteria for recognition as a 'Thinking School' have now become so embedded that staff and students have developed a deeper understanding of the principles of cognitive education and its impact on both their individual learning and its potential contribution to society. Much of the evidence referenced in this report reflects the significant and sustained progress the school has made in its on-going journey as a thinking and learning community and follows on from the previous accreditations as a level 1 and level 2 Thinking School.

The focus for this second level of evaluation turns towards the presentation of evidence as to how the school has moved forward in seeking to achieve those aims. Evidence has been sought on teaching (and support) staff's developing skills as practitioners; their impact on the overall development of the students beyond their technical skills in the use of the tools; and their continuing impact on the community of the whole school and beyond. Five key areas for accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School have been assessed: Dissemination of Practice; Evaluative Research; Professional Development; Differentiation; and Whole School Assessment.

The University of Exeter received the school's submission for re- accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School from Penbridge Junior School (PJS) in the form of a Reflective Proforma with evidence links, extensively illustrating the continuing work the school is undertaking as a level 1 Thinking School together with how it has continued to move forward as a level 2 Thinking School. School evidence includes pupils' work, examples of displays and posters, relevant sections of the school improvement plan, Headteacher reports, photographs, newsletters, project plans, video evidence, Drive Team documentation, action plans, meetings minutes, learning walks observations, other data. From the evidence provided, it is clear that the school exceeds the Level 1 Thinking School criteria, and the focus of this report will be on continued development of the school on the basis of the level 2 criteria.

Starting point: the school context

PJS is a popular and above average size junior school with 443 pupils on roll (4 form entry). The school is a well-established part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT), having joined the trust in 2014. TSAT is a large multi-academy trust comprised of 20 schools (11 primary and 9 secondary).

The school has a long history of Thinking School development and accreditation and has been at the core of the Thinking School movement for many years. The school has sustained its Thinking School development superbly and has gone from strength to strength by continually refreshing its focus and building progressively on its initiatives. It was awarded Advanced Thinking School Accreditation in October 2019. PJS is a school where every individual is encouraged to achieve excellence and this is captured well in its ethos statements: 'Love Learning for Life', 'Transforming Life Chances' and 'Making Learning Irresistible'. These are further illustrated in the six core values of:

- Show respect
- Be kind
- Aim high
- Be resilient
- Be independent
- Work well with others

The ethos and values are wonderfully captured by the 'Penbridge Powers' of Collaboration, Improvement, Concentration and Curiosity. In doing so, PJS has ensured that the Thinking Schools approach is a firm and secure part of the learning culture of the entire school.

Although pupils' attainment on entry is broadly in line with national figures, the school is well above the national average for the percentage of disadvantaged children on roll. Indeed, PJS serves a deprived inner-city area. That said, attendance is in line with the national average and fixed-term exclusions are extremely low. This is indicative of an educational provision that serves the wider needs of all pupils. PJS is rated 'Good' by Ofsted and is clearly a school that prides itself in achieving and maintaining the highest educational standards. In addition, the school has an excellent reputation for supporting students through its inclusive pastoral system together with an outstanding extra-curricular offering. These achievements reflect the school's drive for sustained holistic development, together with an unwavering commitment to lifelong learning for all.

The school's cognitive education development journey has moved forward unswervingly since its previous accreditation. Subsequently, a clear thread of training has been in place capturing the seven TSAT Principles of Teaching and Learning: Subject Knowledge, Explanations Questioning, Feedback to Feed Forward, Modelling, Metacognition and Metamemory. These elements have a firm foundation in robust research findings. Within this, Thinking Hats, Thinking Maps, Habits of Mind, CoRT Tools and Thinker's Keys are used to further operationalise the school's Thinking School vision.

The school's aims and ethos have a clear focus on excellence for all pupils. What sets PJS aside from many schools, is its emphasis on how this is achieved. With reference to this, the school seeks to make learning irresistible by developing children as creative, adaptable, and resilient thinkers so that they become committed lifelong learners. PJS has embedded thinking and meta-cognitive approaches in all aspects of school life in order to ensure that its aims and ethos are a reality. High quality CPD has done much to secure a cohesive staff team and results for 2022 are broadly in line with national figures. Writing standards are particularly impressive and well above national figures.

Dissemination of practice

For this area of accreditation, we assess the way in which the school can demonstrate evidence of sharing their Thinking Schools practice and experiences across subject areas with others. There is extensive evidence of sharing practice within the school, across subjects and teams, with all sections of staff participating in formal and informal staff training events and programmes. Using the TSAT Thinking Pathways model as a framework, there is ample evidence of effective dissemination of tools, but also a focus on differentiation. There is a rich blend of qualitative data that contributes well to the collaborative dissemination of best practice. This includes casual observations, pupil interviews and 'book looks'. Of particular note is the move from performance management targets to staff identifying their own areas of professional need/learning. The Thinking School Lead co-ordinates a wealth of training and support. Cross Trust CPD has involved the Drive Team delivering training sessions on Thinking Tools and metacognitive strategies. Data relating to impact on learning is judiciously collated, evaluated and disseminated. As such, there is a clear whole school understanding of children's learning progress in both qualitative and quantitative domains.

Members of staff are encouraged to take a range of professional qualifications as suited to specific professional needs. These range from short-term courses to Master's degrees. Research is clearly and intrinsic part of professional learning at PJS and impacts well on the holistic growth of pupils. The new initiatives of 'Penbridge Powers' and 'Be Your Best Self' (BYBS) have enabled the school to further enhance the dispositional qualities of pupils. The use of expert groups to share knowledge and expertise is particularly effective and stands as a model of outstanding practice. As a result, PJS disseminates high impact practice across internal subject areas, the local community, cluster schools, nationally and internationally.

All new staff receive training in theory, pedagogy, and practical approaches relating to Thinking. There is an extensive and innovative range of resources and structures to further support the dissemination of Thinking School approaches and students are pivotal to disseminating best practice. Rigorous timelines ensure that the process of dissemination is planned and actioned effectively. Conferences and associated workshops further add to the school's process of dissemination. In addition, PJS links well with schools nationally and globally through visits and innovative video presentations. Indeed, publications include video presentations and dissertations.

Evaluative research

This area of evaluation is particularly concerned with the ways in which staff are seeking evidence of the positive impact and outcomes of the Thinking Schools approach and how this evidence is used to drive whole school learning and improvement. Based on the evidence of Level 1 and level 2 criteria, there is a continuing and wide-ranging programme of evaluation within the school. This includes specific consideration of the process and impact of initiatives on the learning and development of students. Evaluative Research is embedded in the working practices of the entire school. PJS utilises a range of data collection tools including questionnaires for staff and students. The Drive Team play a pivotal role in coordinating data collection and the subsequent analyses. The proactive involvement of the Student Voice in this respect ensures that research has an inductive as well as deductive dimension. MALS is used formatively to inform and evaluate the impact of research-based interventions and this process has undergone astute development such that a representative sample of pupils is used in order to improve the workability and effectiveness of the process. The school has moved away from performance management towards a model of 'Professional Growth'. This ethos has encouraged staff to engage with research as a fundamental basis for teaching. This has given rise to a range of Action Research projects both formal (accredited) and informal ('in-house'). The resulting outcomes are impressive, particularly in terms of dissertation quality.

The 'Be Your Best Self' initiative is an excellent reflective process and makes use of Thinking Hats to facilitate this. Thinking Hats are also used for learning walks and utilize the 'What went well...', 'Even better if...', and 'What actions will there be? When?' prompts. Research at PJS has clear, succinct parameters outlining what is being studied, who is being studied, together with associated timeframe. This is an excellent example of the school's commitment to delivering practitioner research excellence. Of particular note, is the cumulative use of the SPARE model of Evaluative Research. This has done much to secure an ongoing cycle of Thinking School development. Findings from research have directly influenced the work of the PJS Drive Team and staff across the school, and the cycle of Lesson Study feeds into the process well. Quality Assurance is provided extremely effectively and the visit from John Caville is an excellent example of integrating internal and external evaluative processes. Again, the student voice is pivotal and the innovative 'Be Your Best Self' (BYBS) Journal is a

good example of this. Evidence is presented that demonstrates the ongoing collection of data related to Thinking Skills across the school, in particular with respect to how well Thinking Skills are embedded within the school system and what the impact is on students and staff. It is clear that there are effective strategies in place across subject areas that encourage and support evaluation and reflective practice of learning and teaching approaches and impact. The Drive Team provide a skilful and rich representation of expertise from across the school so that new ideas for teaching and learning are explored, researched and, if successful, fed back to the wider staff body. Furthermore, Thinking Skills and dispositional development are part of ongoing evaluations of student progress, providing further evidence of the ongoing evaluation of Thinking Skills approaches throughout the school. It is important to note in this respect, that students are routinely consulted about what the Thinking Tools mean to them. Another important factor within the continuous evaluation of the outcomes of taking a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking, is the evidence of the development of pupil resilience and self-reflection, as well as a sense of shared responsibility towards one another, as demonstrated through the BYBS Journals which forms an intrinsic part of the school's dispositional development strand. The focus on the development of the whole child is a particularly strong aspect of school life at PJS. Evaluation has a focus on impact, and this indicates that the Thinking School approach has a clear impact on the positive learning outcomes and behaviours of the whole school community.

Professional development

Evidence of professional development concerns two key issues: technical, in the practical application of a range of thinking tools; and qualitative demonstrated by the quality of staff as mediators.

In terms of technical development, it is clear from the school development planning that new members of staff are routinely training in Thinking Skills. CPD has been effectively re-framed as 'Professional Growth' and the drive for application in lessons has a clear set of parameters. The clear and integrated curriculum intent statement is visually represented, and this does much to aid the overall coherence of the pedagogical aims. There is an excellent Trust Induction programme in place and ensures that professional development opportunities are consistent and well embedded in the culture of the entire trust. New staff are automatically

trained in all the thinking tools and associated pedagogy. This is wonderfully supplemented by the provision of opportunities to shadow, discuss and observe lessons conducted by lead practitioners. The introduction of the Trust's Seven Principles of Teaching has been highly influential due to its clear and concise elements. These include:

- Subject Knowledge
- Explanations, Questioning and Responding
- Feedback to Feedforward
- Modelling
- Metacognition
- Meta-memory

This has evolved into a reactive process model based on contextual need and application. This is evidence of the school's commitment and appreciation of the need to consider the specific setting for educational developments. There is an excellent Teaching and Support Staff Professional Growth pack, and the online training is an example of exemplary CPD practice. PJS is expert in the application of digital learning. Retrieval Practice development has seen excellent impact and development and is embedded in practice across the school.

PJS has responded to the pandemic with unwavering commitment and resilience in order to keep the professional growth provision moving forward. Judicious ongoing evaluative research builds individual strengths and areas for development into whole school planning and actions. The Drive Team has regular focussed meetings with clear development action points that further feed into CPD linked to priorities. PJS provides a range of innovative bespoke resources for staff in order to operationalise the priorities. These excellent resources are supplemented by modelled examples so staff can actually see how they might apply what they have learned in their own classrooms. Pupil feedback plays an intrinsic part on development planning and is used to triangulate reflections, plans and actions. Mentoring and Coaching are integral to the Professional Growth of all staff. The focus is on developing teachers as mediators of learning and CPD is clearly aligned to this by developing the skill and craft of every teacher. This has allowed the school to focus not so much on the use of specific Thinking Tools, but to provide a strong background and rationale for Thinking across subject

areas, which demonstrates an excellent understanding and awareness of Thinking as a pedagogic strategy throughout the school.

The TSAT conference and associated workshops are wonderfully organised and provide a wealth of rich and inspirational opportunities for professional growth. The 'Think Ahead' model is again an example of exceptional practice in terms of staff actively engaging in reflective practice. The quality of TA training is exceptionally high and adds significantly to the overall quality of CPD provision. There is strong evidence of the continued focus of staff on the development of their own knowledge and understanding of Thinking and Thinking Skills approaches in general. Thinking Skills approaches are continually evaluated throughout the school and staff are routinely asked to reflect on their use of Thinking Tools. Professional qualifications are used judiciously in order to enable staff to enhance their roles within the trust and beyond. This again provides strong evidence that the use of Thinking Skills and the language around Thinking is strongly embedded within the school, the teaching practice, and its overall Ethos, such that the school's developmental influence is far reaching. It is clear, from the evidence provided relating to staff induction, that new staff are immediately made aware of this ethos and practice. Importantly, staff are given the time and resources to train and to work with colleagues through cycles of lesson observations. The 'Thinking Horizons Middle Leadership Programme is outstanding. It is integrated, cohesive and has plenty of scope contextualising the school's CPD provision.

Differentiation

This area of accreditation includes the value of thinking tools in the education of specific individuals and groups. This includes a sensitivity to the individual needs of all the children in lessons, and a focus on developing autonomy and individuality in students' approaches to problem-solving. Through thorough and on-going dialogue with pupils, teachers are able to mediate learning such that learning is geared towards the needs of all students at an individual level, regardless of starting point or specific barriers to learning. Weekly and medium-term planning fully embraces differentiation and teaching clearly puts this into practice. As such, PJS has developed a unique culture of personalisation that goes beyond a 'broad-brush' approach to learning and teaching. Knowledge Banks aligned to Retrieval Practice are excellent examples of pedagogy being tailored to the individual needs of pupils

and the pupils' self-peer assessment folders show wonderful individuality and autonomy in terms of problem-solving skills. A variety of Thinking Tools are used adaptively, to suit the abilities of different students, for instance, through the engagement of pupils in taking responsibility for their own development as lifelong learners, skilfully achieved through mediated teaching. Learning walks indicate that differentiation is an intrinsic part of learning and teaching at PJS. Progression is clearly mapped via The 7 Principles of Teaching and Learning and all students are encouraged to develop individuality and autonomy. Student support is also highly personalised and adds significant value to the educational provision at PJS. The SEND documentation further illustrates the excellent child-centred ethos and practice at PJS. Resources are carefully differentiated in order to enable all children to access tasks and displays are used actively to promote discussion related to the identification of thinking processes. Pupils choose their own Thinking Hat for reflection on their work and verbal self-assessment provides an inclusive mechanism for enabling all students to access the reflective process. This means that Thinking Strategies underpin the personal learning targets and behavioural goals of all pupils. The Student Voice is a strong part of the learning culture of the school and means that teachers can identify what works best, for whom, under what circumstances, how and why.

Whole School assessment

This aspect of the accreditation relates to pupils' and teachers' reflections upon their own and others' performance via assessment procedures, as well as critical reflection on Thinking Tools. Whole school assessment policy and practice are a core strength of the school. Peer and self-assessment are exceptional and embedded in the culture of the school such that these qualities are nurtured and flourish. The formative use of MALS together with the BYBS Journal are illustrative of this particular element. These mechanisms are used very effectively. Overall, this data indicates that students have a high level of satisfaction with school and also have high levels of confidence in learning. The Thinking Like and Expert process does much to bring subject content to life and the Think Ahead Professional Growth initiative has played a significant role in securing high quality reflective practice. Mentoring and interventions are implemented to secure the very best learning for all children. Thinking tools such as Thinking Maps and Thinking Hats are also used effectively for assessment and evaluation purposes.

Evidence is sought for the reflective processes of staff through the emphasis of developing as a researching professional. Staff approach curriculum developments via action research projects that focus on key questions relating to taking thinking approach in this respect. Pupils are encouraged to find meaning in a variety of thinking approaches such that they see the relevance and point of developing them. The Thinking Like and Expert approach is an outstanding mechanism for this. Assessment and evaluative information are shared school-wide in order to strengthen the consistency of effective teaching and learning strategies. A clear line of pupil feedback has been highly effective in identifying learning needs from the children's perspective. Of particular note, is the use of pupil interviews to gain an insight into children's social and emotional views of the school. Parents are also involved in the monitoring process. They are supported well by the school and the Retrieval Practice Primary Guide for Parents is an excellent example of this. PJS goes beyond using assessment as a summative indicator towards using it as a formative tool to support and enhance pupils' learning. At each juncture the aim of the school is to secure full and effective learning for all pupils. Staff are encouraged to reflect on the use of Thinking Tools and strategies and evidence demonstrates continuous reflection on the implementations, use, and impact of Thinking Tools.

Overall, it is clear that there are continuous formal and informal critical evaluations of Thinking Skills, Approaches and Tools taking place throughout PJS, which include a wide variety of stakeholders. This is a clear indicator of the way in which a culture of thinking is fully embedded within the school.

Points for further consideration

PJS has responded well to the points for further consideration suggested in the previous accreditation report. The developments relating to evaluative research is a good example of this and action research is an intrinsic part of professional growth. I conclude my evaluation with some suggestions as to how the school could continue to develop as a Thinking School and possibly inform a development workshop to further aid action planning. This might include:

- Consider the work of Project Zero, particularly the research and materials by Ron Ritchhart as these provide a rich source of classroom ideas and real-time dynamic assessment practices to compliment the already excellent practice at PJS.
- Consider adding the internal use of effect sizes at an individual teacher, team, and whole school level to further strengthen the quantitative robustness of data in order to supplement high quality qualitative data. This will allow impact comparisons of meta-cognitive strategies and feedback with the work of The Sutton Trust and John Hattie.
- Further develop evaluative research and align action research to the SPARE model. The SPARE model of evaluative action research is a useful framework through which to apply evaluative research at all levels of leadership and classroom practice and could easily be applied to the Intent, Implementation and Impact approach to curriculum development given the alignment of PAR to Intent, Implementation, and Impact. The addition of the Setting (S) and Evaluation (E) would enhance current practice without having to re-invent it.
- Continue to use the criteria of an Advanced Thinking School to frame future developments, in order to deepen and extend the understanding and expertise of PJS. In particular, the extension of practitioner research through wider dissemination of the SPARE model of illuminative evaluation may provide a vehicle for further contextualising cognitive approaches to find out what works best, for whom, under what circumstances, how and why.

Outcome

The substantive evidence provided by PJS creates a very clear picture of a Thinking School in which Thinking Skills are at the heart of school life. PJS is a truly exceptional school. It has an unwavering commitment to taking a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking. PJS has a unique and collaborative approach that has permeated every facet of learning and teaching. It is undoubtedly a model of exemplary practice for others to emulate. The school is a learning community in every sense and has managed to bring its core values and purpose to life. As such, the whole learning community develop as holistic lifelong learners in an ongoing way. PJS is clearly research-informed and this is illustrative of a school that is committed to the highest standards of educational provision for all children. High

achievement and the wellbeing of both pupils and staff flourish. PJS is a beacon of meta-cognitive excellence, and it has been a pleasure to review the progress of the school.

In conclusion, the application has provided compelling and comprehensive evidence for accreditation, and I therefore recommend that re-accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School be awarded until January 2026. Congratulations to Penbridge Junior School for an exceptional achievement!



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On behalf of Dr Judith Kleine-Staarman, Director of Thinking Schools @Exeter

January 2023