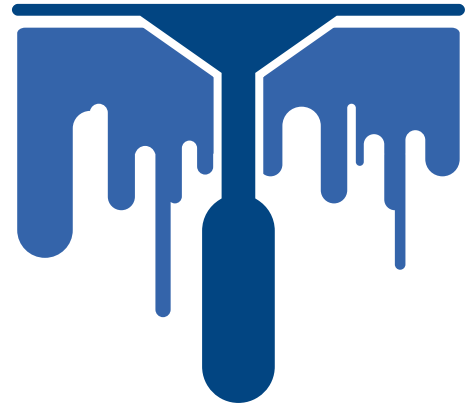
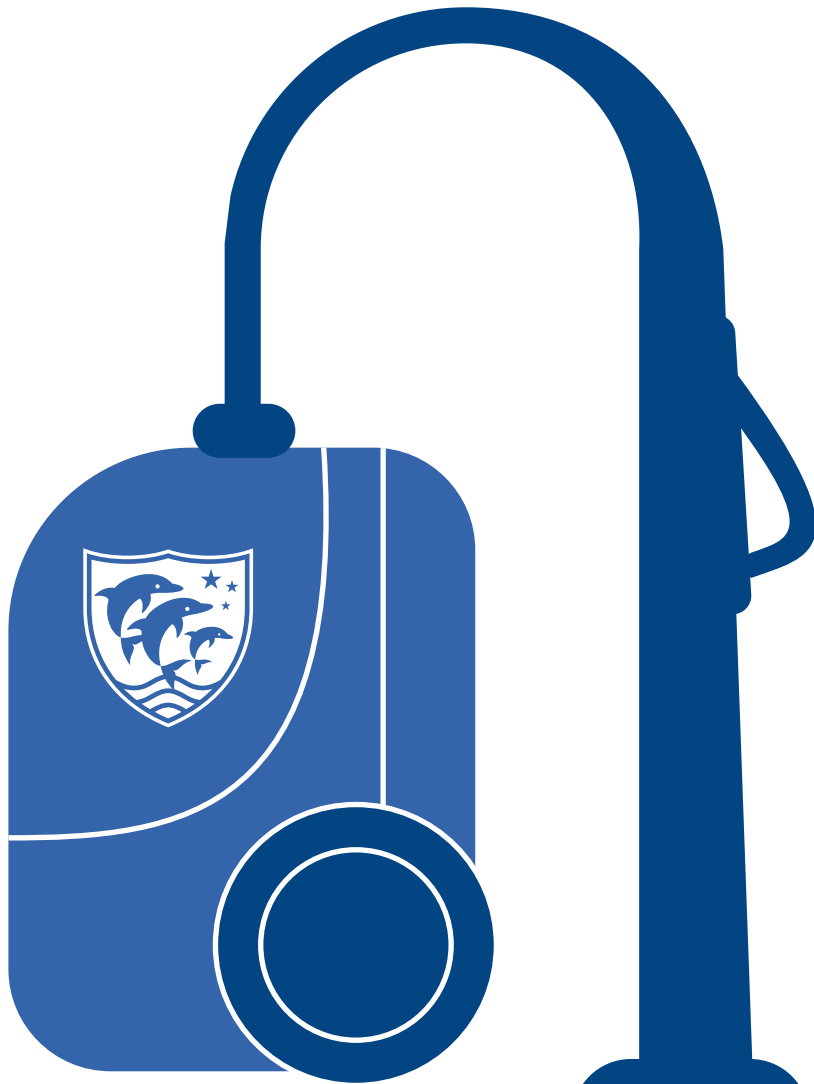




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Issue 9, Autumn 2011



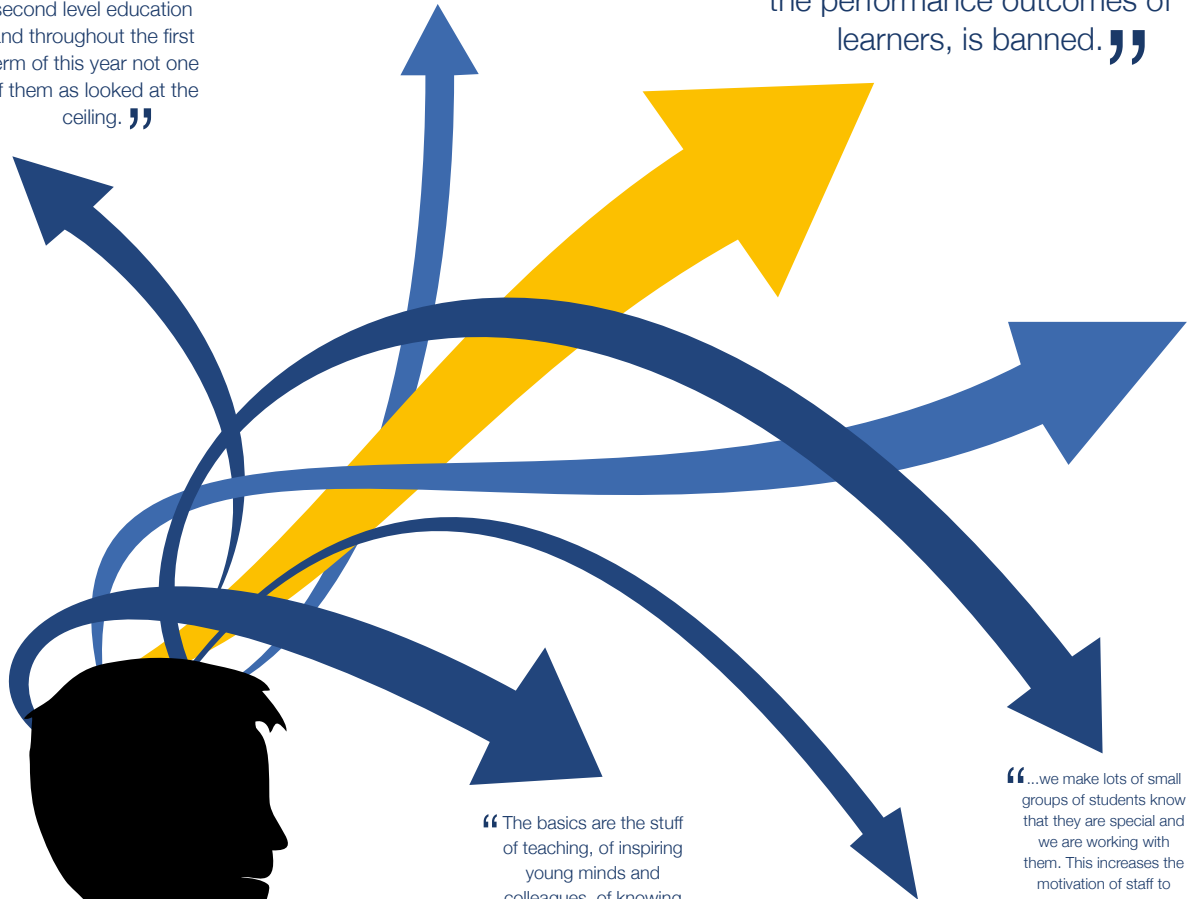
Fluff Free Zone

Making our All-Through, all-through

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“ An outstanding lesson is about planning, differentiation, progress, assessment and engagement. It is making judgements and adjustments to get the most out of that group of individuals. It is about that spark of excitement or energy which takes it to the next level. It is those lessons which inspire awe and wonder where teachers and children can be heard talking about it long after the lesson is finished. ”

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“ The basics are the stuff of teaching, of inspiring young minds and colleagues, of knowing every single child as an individual and doing the best for them ”

“ ...we can create aspiration. Once children are successful they want more success and we can build upon that. ”

“ ...we make lots of small groups of students know that they are special and we are working with them. This increases the motivation of staff to make their small group work and it increases the motivation of students to achieve. ”

Fluff Free Zone

Making our All-Through, all-through

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Continuum

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Editor: Gillian Hodgson

Design and Production: Lesley Hall

Contributors:

Anne Franklin
Diane Jacobs
Gillian Hodgson
Hilary Macaulay

John Nolan
Kate Brewer
Lucie Hernandez
Phil Cosby



**WEST LONDON
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PROUD TO LEARN

Cutting out the fluff

Dr Hilary Macaulay, Principal and CEO



May 2010 and with it a new Coalition government.... and lots of new ideas. West London Academy has never been averse to new ideas, in fact it positively prides itself on innovation with a purpose and keeping the focus on ensuring that the basics are firmly in place has always been my role. It can be a fine balancing act between the worthwhile innovation, the curve balls and the, frankly, wacky initiatives that come in each term. However working out what the basics are and whether the basics one year or term are the same as the next or even for one year group or Phase is a point for discussion in itself, but not here.

The now seemingly predictable four year cycle of 'reinventing the Ofsted inspection framework' brings with it a mixture of responses from staff, unions and the media but at its heart, in my 22 years teaching and 6 different Ofsted Frameworks, has been the relentless focus on standards of teaching and learning, on consistency in doing the best for children and young people and for ensuring professional accountability and who can argue with being judged on that. The basics are the stuff of teaching, of

inspiring young minds and colleagues, of knowing every single child as an individual and doing the best for them, something not always the easiest to do with teenagers who so often have only their own self interest on the agenda. The basics are those elements of a successful school for which there is no glory, where there is year after year of relentless slog and perseverance. The longest, hardest job is that of getting the basics in place then maintaining and reinforcing them and so often it is those quiet people who have the determination to undertake the longest, hardest journey rather than the ones who want the quick fix, the sparkle and the public limelight who have the most profound effect and impact on the achievement and personal development of our children and young people. To them I am eternally humbled and it is for that

reason that West London Academy has cut out the fluff, blown it off every surface and out of every corner in recognition of the depth of impact getting the basics right has on our children.

“The basics are the stuff of teaching, of inspiring young minds and colleagues, of knowing every single child as an individual and doing the best for them”

**Sir Alec Reed,
Founding Sponsor of
West London Academy**

is pictured right giving students a talk in the Academy Theatre about his life, work and sources of inspiration. Sir Alec told students that manners, politeness, honesty and integrity are free for everyone and are some of the most valuable attributes any employer is looking for. Sir Alec Reed answered questions on where he got his ideas from, what was the biggest challenge for him in setting up for the many successful parts of his companies and gave tips so that they could be entrepreneurs too.





One simple promise - to make every lesson good or better

Gillian Hodgson, Vice Principal - Assessment for Learning, Data & Reporting



Consistently good and outstanding teaching leads to students making the best progress they can. Nobody comes to work at West London Academy to do a 'Satisfactory' job. We want to ensure that we provide the support to ensure that even the worst lesson is still a good lesson. Only by being in a situation where every lesson is good or better can we hope to provide the service our community deserves. So we made one simple promise, to make every lesson good or outstanding.

This requires an ethos and an atmosphere of professional challenge and integrity rather than personal self interest. A teacher who states, "how will this affect my threshold application" when they deliver a satisfactory lesson does not really comprehend why we are here. The question should be: "how can you help me to get the best for my students?" The teacher who is only interested in "how can I get out of this?" instead of throwing themselves into the best professional development they are likely to be offered is missing out. It is important to remember that we are here, paid for by the taxpayer and we must deliver the best possible education that we can.

As such in order to ensure that we deliver on our promise that every lesson will be good or outstanding we invest in personalised Professional Support Programmes for staff who have aspects of their work which are satisfactory. Where the staff throw

themselves into the programme led by their Subject/Curriculum/Phase Leaders and overseen by the Academy Leadership Team they show dramatic improvement over time. It is a great luxury to be able to design such high quality subject specific Professional Support Programmes this is only possible because of the strong and experienced middle leadership at the Academy.

The Professional Support Programme requires a significant investment of commitment from the person running the programme and the person being supported. It requires open minds and a willingness to learn, try new things and develop. It is essential for us all to commit to the process if we are to deliver on our promise and make every lesson, a good or better lesson.

Supporting students, supporting success

Anne Franklin, Vice Principal - Student & Family Services



Personalising learning is the most effective way of supporting the learning of any student, increasing confidence about their well being and systematically working to improve their life chances. Through personalising learning all students are expected to reach or exceed expectations, fulfil early promise and develop hidden potential.

Personalised learning is primarily about an ethos that is expressed through a number of components:

- **Achievement:** personalising learning has to be focused on maximising the achievement of every individual
- **Aspiration:** central to personalising learning is a culture of high expectations and aspiration
- **Inclusion:** personalisation applies equally to the gifted and talented and those with special or additional needs.
- **Relational:** learning is an interpersonal process and personalisation offers scope and

opportunities to maximise the quality of learning relationships between students and all those involved in supporting them, including parents and fellow students.

- **Accountability:** personalising learning clarifies personal and professional responsibilities and places high significance on performance for all those involved in the learning process.

A clear knowledge of the current attainment of each student and the progress they are making acts as a prompt to the development of personalised learning. Precise target setting and rigorous and regular tracking of progress towards these targets underpins personalised learning.

Staff use their detailed knowledge of each student's progress to provide more accurate support, more differentiated teaching and more personal provision. For example, they adapt plans, re-group students in class according to their understanding, provide additional time and support on difficult topics, set more challenging tasks for those who need to be stretched and set personalised targets.

A personalised approach to supporting children means tailoring learning to the needs, interests and aspirations of each child whilst tackling barriers to learning to allow each child to achieve their potential. Through a personalised success pathway a student may need to have some

time scheduled in a different / smaller learning environment for example the Access and Inclusion Centre.

Paths to adulthood are more complex than they once were and young people are faced with less straightforward paths through education and into employment than once was the case. Soft or non-cognitive skills are becoming increasingly important to young people's ability to negotiate these transitions and make the best choices and decisions. Non-cognitive skills such as team work, communication and understanding of others, aspiration, the ability to deal with tasks and to solve problems have a protective effect, helping to support other positive outcomes such as attainment and employment.

“Through personalising learning all students are expected to reach or exceed expectations, fulfil early promise and develop hidden potential”



The Hawthorne Effect – how we make intervention work

Gillian Hodgson, Vice Principal - Assessment for Learning, Data & Reporting

Whether the results of the experiments on productivity at the Hawthorne Works plant of Western Electric were conclusive is for academics to debate. The fact is that the term ‘Hawthorne Effect’ entered our vocabulary after this experiment showed that participants in an experiment can work harder and perform better just by the virtue that they are participants.

When we identify students in Year 11 to put them in a strategy group we tell them that they are special, the chosen students, the students we have a great deal of faith in. And we do. They still have a form tutor, just as all other students do, they still have the same lessons, the same access to after hours learning, the same opportunities as other students. By nature of being in that group something changes. They make more progress, is it the ‘hawthorne effect’? Do they improve their performance because they feel special?

Experiments in education are complex with many factors affecting results.

Performance by students is not the result of any one action and we can rarely say with a high degree of certainty what has caused the results. Yet as professionals who work with students every day we do know the positive effect that can be gained when a student knows we care and believes they can reach their targets. Our intervention programmes for all years are personalised to the individuals who are in front of us. They are different every year. Yet they always have one thing in common, we make lots of small groups of students know that they are special and we are working with them. This increases the motivation of staff to make their small group work and it increases the motivation of students to achieve.

Our students know and tell us that they are lucky to be in an Academy which knows them as individuals and that they are lucky to work with staff who are determined to do whatever it takes to help them succeed. They also know that they are doing this for themselves, to help themselves

be successful, but our current Year 11 with their competitive spirits, if the boys want to get better results to beat the girls then that is also fine. We know because we have seen them do it on other results days that, after they have seen their own results they will congratulate others on their performance because they know they have all worked hard to achieve the grades they deserve and the group mentality to spur each other on is quite profound.

“...we make lots of small groups of students know that they are special and we are working with them. This increases the motivation of staff to make their small group work and it increases the motivation of students to achieve.”



Spending time on the important things

Dr Hilary Macaulay, Principal and CEO

Remember the good old days when teachers were able to look forward to at least an hour or two of cover for absent colleagues each week and do a spot of marking whilst the children filled in work sheets, designed yet another poster or copied out of books. Those balmy Summer term days that were free of Year 11 students so teachers didn't have any work to do at all and could dream about the long Summer holidays as they strolled up and down an examination hall whilst their friends from university who had not chosen such an easy career route with a teacher's 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. working day had to slog away in offices to meet KPIs and ensure profitability. Then there were the 13 weeks annual holiday to just relax. Staff would chat in the staffroom for hours on end in free periods and all paid for by the government. Planning

for Sports Day happened months in advance and invariably resulted in a coloured booklet for the day to make it look exciting or at least try to justify a salary for organising it, and bringing a cute Polish Lowland Sheepdog along to the Summer Fayre (which had also been planned for weeks on end by staff who had needed their lessons covered to design the invitation) were the days where teachers could be busy doing nothing working the whole day through.....

Now for the reality check.

Up by 5.30 a.m. and in school before 7 a.m. each day to ensure all the resources for each lesson were ready, working on marking until midnight or beyond each evening, preparing for the 5 hours of back to back lessons which would address the individual learning needs of each member of

the group and ensure the work was thoroughly differentiated, spending four of the six weeks in the summer preparing 6 new GCSE and/or A level English literature texts and resources and the remaining two weeks being in for the A level and GCSE results and doing the analysis for one's teaching groups, writing detailed sets of reports with rigorous assessment and attainment data backed up by personalised subject targets and spending the weekends trying to fit in the household jobs around yet more marking, assessment and planning.... this is the reality of the noble profession of teaching which those who are fortunate enough to be in it have subscribed to. This is also the core business that teachers have trained for and are under no illusion of what it entails and is a profession in the truest sense of the word.

The process of professionalising teaching through removing the 1,853 tasks (or however many there were) from teachers such as collecting dinner money, doing cover, doing invigilation, handing out lanyards to students who do lunchtime duties, and so on has meant that the teaching profession has, for the past seven years, been able to focus on exactly what it fought and indeed trained for – to be able to plan, teach, mark, assess, report and, in doing so, raise the attainment of learners. Thus, through facilitating genuine professional accountability so that staff do not run about chasing their tails

like the Polish Lowland Sheepdog at the Summer Fayre, but are very busy and focussed doing something highly constructive, working the whole year through West London Academy has officially declared itself as a ‘fluff free zone’. Anything superfluous to learning and teaching, planning, marking, assessment and the regular feedback and reporting of students progress to them and their parents/carers, in fact anything which does not directly contribute to raising the performance outcomes of learners, is banned. Now this could be the start of a school song!



“West London Academy has officially declared itself as a ‘fluff free zone’ where anything superfluous to learning and teaching, planning, marking, assessment and the regular feedback and reporting of students progress”

4 Featured Item : LEADING BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING



No stone unturned

Diane Jacobs, Year 10 SaFE Worker

All teachers have a right to teach and all students have a right to learn!

It is our job to build on this fundamental principle and ensure that the Academy has a conducive learning atmosphere where students feel secure and supported and able to fulfill their academic and personal potential.

Discipline is a key factor when considering what the crucial factors are in creating an effective learning environment. WLA has a clear set of rules and regulations which is adhered to lead to a calm, structured environment where efforts can be concentrated on delivering teaching and learning.

Implementing these rules is the difficult part and presents many challenges. Students constantly push the boundaries and all too often their parents support them so it is vital that relationships between home and school are strong and collaborative so that parents are on the side of

delivering the same message as school. In order to achieve this, communication needs to be clear, concise and unambiguous from the outset. Students need to understand that there are consequences if they fail to follow rules and that staff will follow up all incidents. The basics need to be firmly in place and the starting point has to be uniform, punctuality, and attendance. Failure to follow these basic school rules must result in immediate action, with students being spoken to and parents contacted.

Systems need to be in place to counter the many excuses students use e.g. if the issue is incorrect shoes students are expected to wear a pair kept in supply, failure to do so results in students being taken out of circulation until the issue is remedied.

An immediate response to a discipline issue results in a very clear message being sent out to the year group, which is that non-compliance is not an option and students very soon realize that their energies are far better

channeled positively.

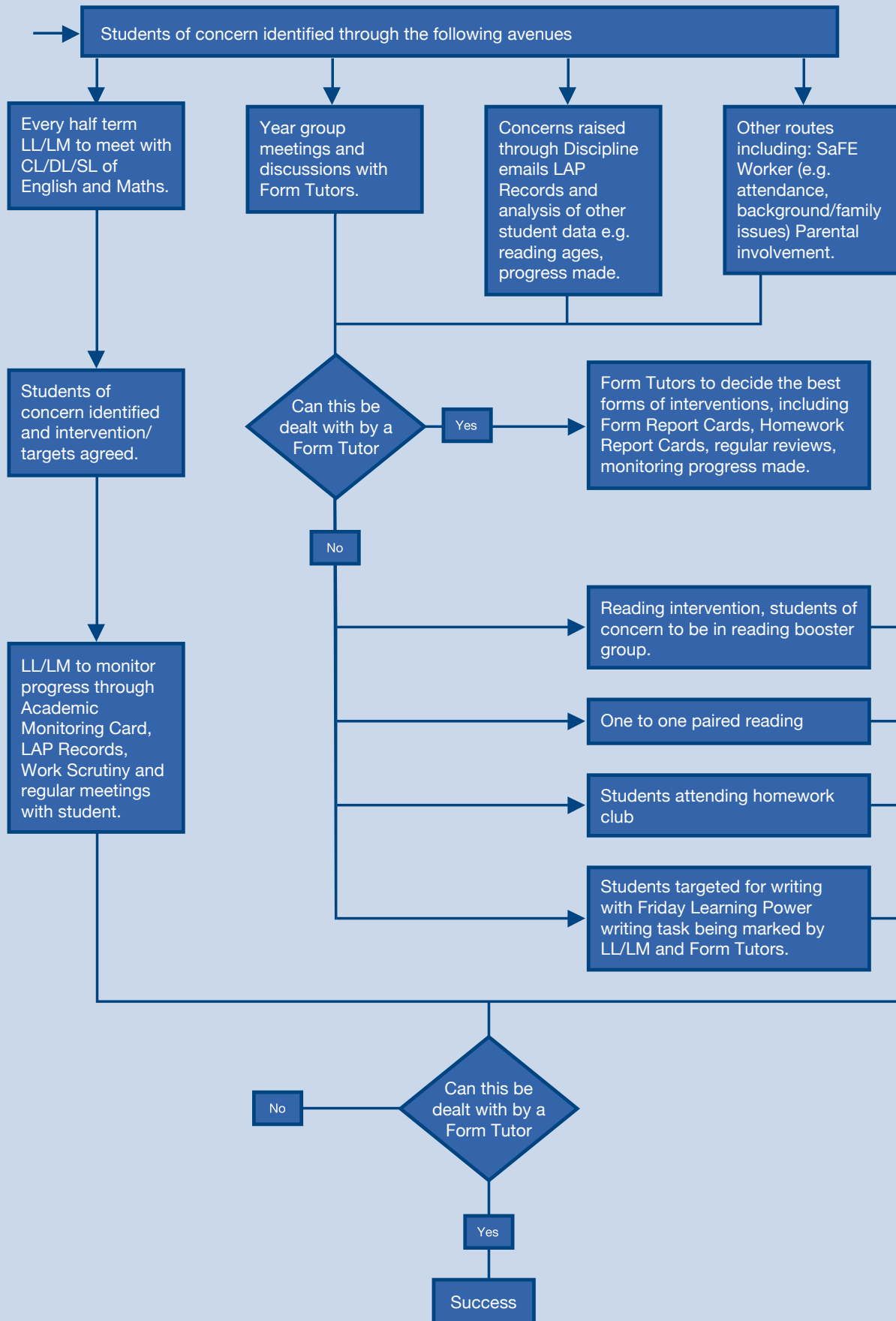
As a year group we work very much as a team and have systems in place which are constantly monitored and reviewed for their effectiveness. If loopholes are found, changes are made.

Ultimately we recognise that having a positive rapport with students and parents is more effective when promoting independence, development and accountability for their own learning. Recognition must be given to students who meet and exceed expectations so that they feel valued, and parents should be encouraged to work towards the common goal of supporting their children to raise their aspirations.

A firm but fair approach consistently applied but tailored to the individual student maximises the effect and achieves the desired result in most cases.

Year 10 Leading Intervention

John Nolan, Learning Manager





Academy Strategic Review

Lucie Hernandez, Curriculum Leader - PE and Sport



So we were second up, after our examination results I thought we'd be the first! It was the morning after the night before... an energetic Year 6 open day had meant that it had been a long week and the most realistic time to see a day in the life of the PE and Sport department. The department had only a few days to prepare and I think this was necessary in order to provide an honest representation of the staff within the department.

I sent the email out for an emergency meeting on the Tuesday break time

and sat back whilst a few members of staff started to recall what they may or may not have done to ascertain why the red exclamation mark came up with the email I had sent them. There was little known about the new Strategic Review process and what to expect so I shared with the staff that in my opinion that this would be an opportunity for all the department to demonstrate their value and show what they do day in day out to help our students enjoy and achieve in PE.

There had been a number of Learning Walks and department Work Scrutinies over the term to ensure I had a grasp on the team's strengths as well as which areas needed development, nonetheless this experience was insightful. I have always had a strong vision for the Physical Education and Sport department and this is only now starting to flourish and take shape. The Strategic Review process allowed me to take a lead, demonstrate I knew the strengths and flaws of the department and enable me to have

frank discussion with people about the curriculum area. I was able to see the curriculum from the outside, to see how an independent person, or two of our Vice Principals in this case, would view the activities. This gave me the passion and motivation to drive through the initiatives that I had begun to implement.

The strategic review was essential in order to ensure that the department raises attainment and participation in Physical Education and Sport. We all want to provide active and engaging practical lessons to support the students in leading a healthy active lifestyle. We now know how we could do that better. As expected the department as a whole stepped up and took this experience as a positive method to showcase themselves as a team and as individuals striving for success with their students. Only now have we been in a position to really look at ourselves and lead the improvement on learner outcomes.

Academy Strategic Review

The Academy Strategic Review process is a part of the Academy IMPACT® Strategy. Where we believe that Improvement comes about through not only **M**onitoring **P**erformance but also through taking **A**ction, having **C**hallenge and **T**argeting the right things.

Strategic Conversation 1

A strategic conversation with the responsibility holder and two members of the Leadership Team starts the process off. An evaluation of the Lesson Observations, Learning Walks, Exam Analysis and Student Voice highlights areas which the responsibility holder would like to focus on.

Strategic Review

This is a day in the life of a particular part of the Academy. Joint lesson observations, work scrutiny, learning walks all take part throughout the day. The benefit of the one day approach is that it shows very clearly what a typical day is like for students.

Strategic Conversation 2

Key themes which the responsibility holder and Leadership Team consider to be strengths and areas for development are pulled together. This is about empowering the responsibility holder to take the steps necessary to make improvements.

Line Management

Monitoring the agreed actions and interventions through line management meetings and unwritten records is essential to ensuring that this process is not simply a measuring tool



We are not here to entertain you

Phil Cosby, Vice Principal - Development & Operations

I probably have the opportunity to observe more lessons than any other member of staff in the Academy and most of the time I consider this to be one of the most enjoyable aspects of my role as I get to see so many teachers delivering high quality lessons that engage and motivate students to learn. I have little doubt that I have become a better teacher since I have been at the Academy and I see the same progress in many other teachers. There is no doubt that observing others and allowing others to observe you and give feedback is one of the best forms of professional development available for teachers.

The least successful lessons, those observed as 'Inadequate' or 'Satisfactory' often have similar issues. Regularly cropping up is the over planning syndrome, a belief that by planning for outcomes on ECM, literacy, numeracy, PSHCE, PKLS, PLTS and Sport, Olympic values and Enterprise, this will lead to an outstanding lesson as "all the boxes

were ticked". These teachers over concentrated on ticking all the boxes, trying to entertain the students, rather than simply ensuring that, during the lesson, the students are engaged, they are achieving, learning is taking place and that progress is being assessed and judged. It was never the intention to provide a disjointed lesson but this is in the least effective lessons what happens. Needless to say the PLKS, PLTS, Sport and Olympic values are fluff that the Academy has quickly cut out – and with astonishingly positive results.

The most effective lessons have a sense of "Awe and Wonder", progress is seen at every turn and the assessments by the teacher are evident as they question the students and adjust the questions to draw deeper understanding. There is also independence of thought by the students who concentrate, problem solve and manage their own learning. If you are looking for a tick list to teach an outstanding lesson then you will

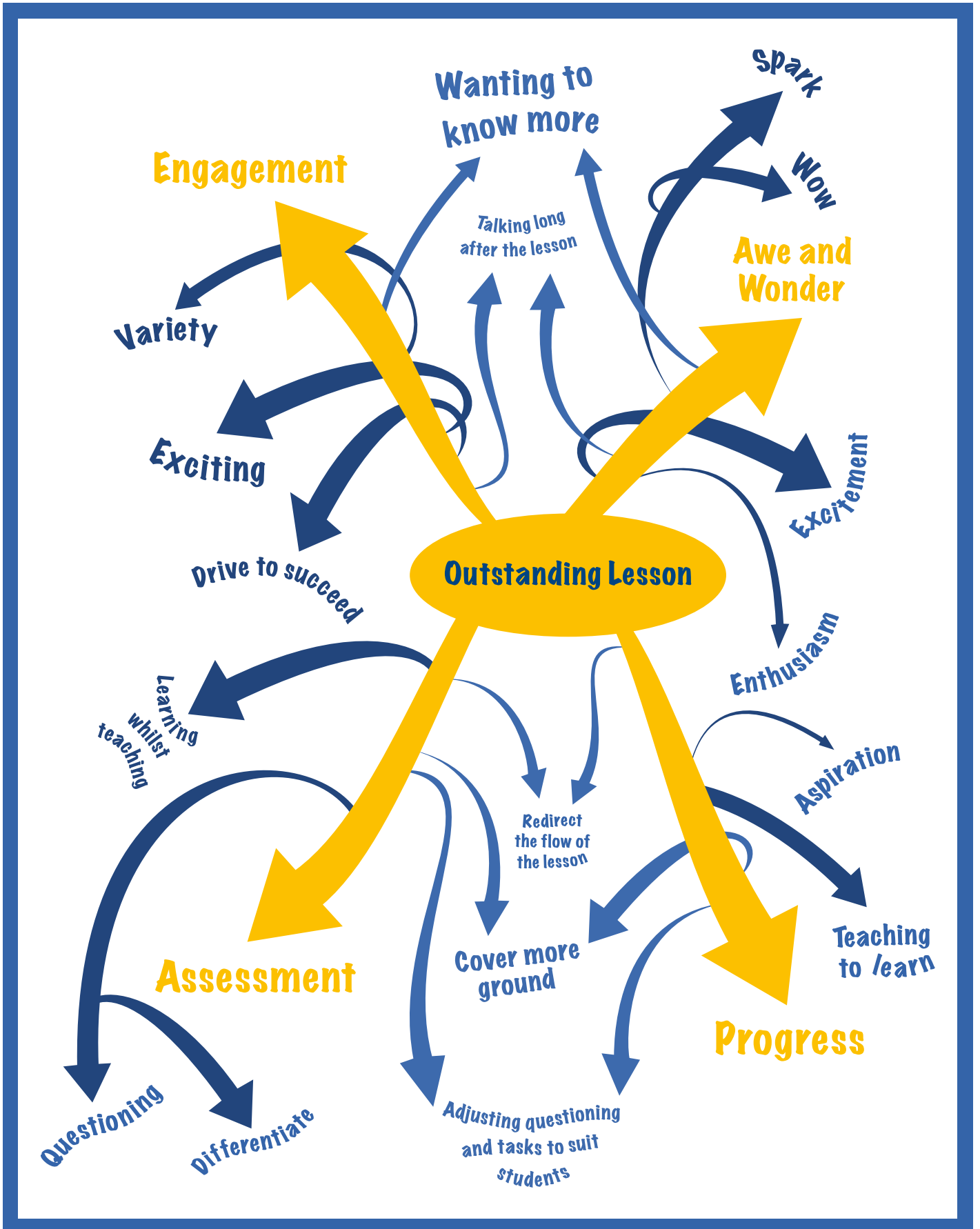
not find it here. It is special. If you were in any doubt as to whether it was outstanding as a lesson then it wasn't. An outstanding lesson is about planning, differentiation, progress, assessment and engagement. It is making judgements and adjustments to get the most out of that group of individuals. It is about that spark of excitement or energy which takes it to the next level. It is those lessons which inspire awe and wonder where teachers and children can be heard talking about it long after the lesson is finished.

Remember that the best teachers have the flexibility to recognise when a plan needs to be changed and adapt the lesson to maximise progress. Identifying opportunities to redirect the flow of the lesson to cover more ground and yet ensuring that the lesson maintains its structure and finishes on time. If we all deliver three part lessons with the same structure lessons can quickly lose their appeal and individuality. Teaching needs to be

exciting and interesting and the format can be adapted but the bottom line is what have the students learned? What can they do now, or know now that

they couldn't or didn't do before? Our teachers, are our most expensive but also our most valuable resource so it is out with the clip boards, tick lists and

handouts and a real focus on teaching to learn and learning whilst teaching.





Stop looking at the ceiling. How to increase concentration levels of Year 7 students

Kate Brewer, Mathematics Teacher

A wealth of research has been conducted, articles published and manuals made readily available on how we can engage students and increase their concentration levels in the classroom for that one, all important, 'perfect lesson'. However what a lot of these articles and manuals fail to do is suggest ways in which we can increase students concentration levels consistently. Increasing engagement in the long term is what will ensure that knowledge and understanding is developed which will in turn improve learners' attainment.

The transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is a difficult one for a large number of children, a transition which can result in a number of students making little or no progress in their first term at secondary school.

At West London Academy to increase concentration levels of Year 7 students the first thing we need to do is ensure we are pitching work at an appropriate level. A lot of, especially low level, disruption from Year 7 students occurs in the classroom due to the fact that these children are bored by work that is being pitched below the level they are capable of working at. This type of disruption, due to boredom can escalate into disorder and inappropriate behaviour in the classroom which can often result in learners regressing academically as opposed to making progress. We are unique at WLA as an all-through Academy where we know better than others what comes before secondary school.

Traditionally students sit the GCSE examinations in June of Year 11.

But we need to ask ourselves, is it beneficial or indeed detrimental for some of our students to wait until Year 11 to sit these examinations? If learners are ready to sit some of their GCSEs before this time then why should we wait? If learners enter Year 7 and are capable of working towards their GCSEs straight away then surely we should challenge them and heighten our expectations of them and more importantly their own expectations of themselves. Aspiration is very empowering.

At West London Academy, that is what we are doing with the current Year 7 cohort. Two groups from this Year group, upon entering the Academy in September have begun working towards their Mathematics GCSE which they will sit in June of this academic year. While some

observers may think that this is too early for these students – it is evident that they are fully able and willing to learn at this fast, content rich pace and the mathematical insights some of these students display show a deep level of understanding. From the beginning these learners have known

the high standard that is expected of them, they have relished this opportunity to attain a GCSE so early on in their second level education and throughout the first term of this year not one of them as looked at the ceiling. I am convinced that this will continue as long as they are

challenged and are given appropriate opportunities to excel and their constant requests about how they can get even better confirm that age must not be a barrier to experiencing genuine success.

The Grand Mathematics Plan

Mathematics is a subject which cuts across all social and cultural divides – the great leveller. You do not need to have experienced life in order to break down complex problems into small parts and solve one by one. What you need is a can do attitude, a determination and above all perseverance. Mathematical achievement can happen at any age and we are increasingly starting them young.

Pilot Programme

A small number of Year 6 students joined a Year 11 class to be taught some extension mathematics and possibly enter the GCSE. They were entered and shortly after achieving a Level 5 in their KS2 SATS (equivalent to a Grade E) they achieved a Grade C at GCSE, making two levels progress in a matter of a couple of weeks.

Expanded Programme

A class of Year 5 and 6 students are being taught the GCSE

topics by the Primary Phase Mathematics Co-ordinator. There is Mathematics specialist support provided to ensure that the subtleties of the Mathematics topics are not missed. Two classes of Year 7 and Year 8 are also being entered for their GCSE this year. The aim is not that this will be their final grade in Mathematics but that we can create aspiration. Once children are successful they want more success and we can build upon that - it is infectious in the best possible way.



Top Tips for a Fluff Free Zone

- 1** Get back to basics, celebrate those staff who seek the best for each individual child and not glory for themselves

- 2** Ensure Learning, Teaching, Assessment and progress are centre stage in everything that is done

- 3** Develop personalised, professional support programmes to ensure that even the worst lesson is always at least a Good lesson

- 4** Tackle barriers by tailoring support and teaching to the individual

- 5** Tailor intervention programmes to the specific cohort, this will require a different strategy each year or term to maximise results

- 6** Concentrate staff effort only on tasks directly contributing to raising performance - no cake sales or non-uniform days!

- 7** Build strong relationships with home so that students have clear boundaries at home and at the Academy

- 8** Empower and train Middle Leaders to drive forward their own ideas for raising performance

- 9** Stop teaching to a tick list and start inspiring

- 10** Aspiration, aspiration, aspiration



About West London Academy

West London Academy is a special partnership between Government and private investment benefiting from a stunning building which opened in September 2005 designed by world famous architects Foster and Partners.

The Academy Sponsor is Sir Alec Reed, founder of the Reed Executive employment and training group.

The Academy comprises:

- A Children's Centre
- A Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative for 3-5 year olds linked to a 0-3 nursery nearby
- A Sure Start parenting programme with activities for children under 3 years
- A Nursery and Primary School for 3-11 year olds
- The John Chilton School for both Primary and High School age students with special needs
- A High School for 11-19 year olds
- An Adult Education Centre
- A Community Sports Centre



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Making our All-Through, all-through

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Bengarth Road Northolt UB5 5LQ
Tel: 020 8842 7841
www.westlondonacademy.co.uk