

MENTOR HANDBOOK

I11 | INSTRUCTION: CLASSROOM TALK

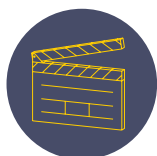
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can facilitate high quality classroom talk if they understand that:

- > Classroom talk can support pupil learning and is a form of 'practicing' new ideas.
- > Teachers can develop successful pupil talk by establishing clear routines and expectations.
- > Teachers can establish effective whole-class, pair and group talk through pre-planning and supporting pupil groups.

Get yourself into a strong position to mentor your teacher by working through the following:



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SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Ms Crosby is increasingly pleased that her questioning is prompting classroom talk but she is unsure how best to structure it to ensure it is having the intended effect. How can she keep pupils talking 'on-task' and what groups are best for pupils to learn in? How can Ms Crosby best support talk and thinking that underpins pupil learning?

KEY IDEA

Teachers can promote pupil learning by giving clear expectations and setting up routines for high-quality classroom talk in pairs and groups.

CLASSROOM TALK SUPPORTS PUPIL LEARNING

When pupils have enough knowledge, high-quality talk can support them to articulate key ideas, consolidate understanding and extend vocabulary. Where pupils discuss concepts with peers, talk reduces individual cognitive load by distributing information across the group, making it more likely pupils will gain new insights into the discussed material (Kirschner et al., 2018).

Through talk, pupils refine their understanding of concepts they are learning about (Jay et al., 2017). It can also provide the opportunity for pupils to rehearse ideas and new vocabulary orally before committing them to paper. However, talk can only succeed where pupils have sufficient knowledge, skills and capabilities linked to a topic or problem, and where clear routines have been established. Talk tasks should not be introduced too early in an instructional sequence.

FACILITATING HIGH QUALITY CLASSROOM TALK

Opportunities to introduce classroom talk might include:

- > When checking pupil understanding, first giving pupils the chance to talk (for example pair talk) before taking a variety of pupil responses.
- > Posing challenging questions which might require pupils to explain something to the teacher or to their partners, deepening their understanding of the material discussed.
- > Guided discussions, for example during the 'We Do' part of the lesson, with teacher prompts guiding pupils' discussions so they elaborate on one another's ideas (Mercer & Dawes, in EEF, 2017).

High-quality talk is underpinned by clear behavioural expectations. By reinforcing and practising these, Ms Crosby can build positive habits for how pupils engage with one another, reducing the risk of inappropriate behaviour (IES, 2008). In addition to clear behavioural expectations, Ms Crosby should ensure talk is:

- > **Collective:** Teacher and all pupils are involved in the dialogue.
- > **Reciprocal:** Participants listen carefully to each other.
- > **Supportive:** Contributions are valued and respected.
- > **Cumulative:** Talk builds on others' contributions towards answering an open-ended question.
- > **Purposeful:** Building towards a meaningful learning goal (Alexander, 2018).

When pupils know the rules of engagement for classroom talk, for example how long they are to talk for and what each person should be doing, they are freed up to think about the material they are learning rather than behaviour.

WHOLE CLASS, PAIRED AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Ms Crosby may wish to start with whole class discussion so she can support pupils and embed her expectations. As a culture of effective talk develops, Ms Crosby may feel confident about setting up first pairs and then groups for pupils to discuss content together for increasing periods of time. Groupings can affect pupil behaviour and motivation (Tereshenko et al., 2018). Therefore, Ms Crosby should pre-plan groupings, but ensure that they are flexible, and monitor groups' impacts on pupil learning and motivation, particularly for low attaining pupils.

Some rules for pair and group work that Ms Crosby might consider introducing are:

- > **All group members must contribute:** This helps to avoid some pupils relying on others to complete group tasks. Team members should encourage those who are saying less (with the caveat being that teachers should monitor groups, as pupils who are not speaking may be doing so because they lack the foundational knowledge needed to contribute and therefore require further explicit teaching).
- > **Every contribution should be treated with respect:** Partners should listen thoughtfully and allow the speaker to finish.
- > **Each group must achieve consensus by the end of the activity:** Teachers may need to resolve differences.
- > **Every suggestion a member makes should be justified:** Pupils should say both what they think and why they think it (Mercer et al., 2004, in EEF, 2018).

As with all expectations, Ms Crosby should circulate to monitor and reinforce these rules (IES, 2008). Crucially, the success of classroom talk is reliant on ensuring several things: that pupils have enough knowledge to engage meaningfully in discussions, that they have the guidance and support to undertake meaningful talk tasks and opportunities to practise.

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

Pair and group work needs to be explicitly taught, scaffolded and practised like all effective learning (Rosenshine, 2012). Attempting to help pupils discover new ideas for themselves through talk without adequate support is likely to be ineffective (Coe et al., 2014).

SELECT

Before you observe, first select a **DEVELOPMENT AREA** to focus on. Next, familiarise yourself with the **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**, as you will zoom in on one of these during your observation. Finally, craft a **PRECISE TARGET** when you observe your teacher (examples are provided below).

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
Positive habits for classroom talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher establishes and communicates clear expectations for how pupils are to behave during classroom discussions. > Teacher explains and models the habits of an effective whole-class discussion. > Teacher supports all pupils to maintain effective habits of whole-class discussion. 	<p>If your teacher is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not doing it at all: Plan and deliver an explanation for pupils that states what they should do during a whole-class discussion e.g. watch the person speaking, listen and think about what their response will be. > Doing it but needs some improvement: Plan and deliver a model to pupils that shows them what they should be doing during a whole-class discussion e.g. modelling the level of attentiveness to the person speaking and thinking aloud the thought process pupils might have in deciding if they want to agree, challenge or build on another pupil's response. > Doing it well, but needs some stretch: Plan and deliver an explanation of a memorable framework for whole-class discussions that captures the habits of effective whole-class discussion and model how it should be used.
Pair talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher ensures pupils are equipped with the knowledge and support to engage in meaningful pair talk that moves them towards a particular learning goal. > Teacher clearly articulates what pupils need to be discussing during pair talk and what they are expected to be able to feedback on afterwards. > Teacher gives clear instructions so pupils begin and end paired discussion in the most efficient way. 	
Group talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher ensures pupils are equipped with the knowledge and support to engage in meaningful group talk that moves them towards a particular learning goal. > Teacher gives pupils manageable, specific and sequential instructions about what the group discussion will entail and the conditions in which the group work will be carried out. > Teacher purposefully circulates to gauge when to provide guidance or scaffolds and when to stretch pupils. 	

RECORD YOUR THINKING HERE

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
(select before observing)	(select whilst observing)	(select/write whilst observing)

OBSERVE

Consider the following questions based on a short (approximately 15 minute) observation of your teacher.

What was your teacher's **previous** target? Are they meeting it? How do you know?

For the **DEVELOPMENT AREA** you are focussing on for this observation, what is your teacher already doing well?

Next, go to the previous page and select a **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA** to further zoom in on. Then select (from the examples) or write one **PRECISE TARGET** (bite-sized action) to coach your teacher on. You can choose to stick with the previous target if your teacher have not made enough progress yet.

How will you model the target to your teacher to show them what good looks like? What questions will you ask to check your teacher understands the model? For example, 'How it is different from your current practice?', 'What impact might it have on your practice and pupils?', 'What links can you see between the model and the module principles (below)?'

Reminder: Your model should help your teacher develop their ability in some of the following:

- > Ensure pupils have relevant domain-specific knowledge, especially when being asked to think critically within a subject.
- > Consider the factors that will support effective collaborative or paired work.
- > Provide scaffolds for pupil talk to increase the focus and rigour of dialogue.
- > Give manageable, specific and sequential instructions.
- > Model and require high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing.

Next, meet with your teacher to work through the 'Feedback' stage of instructional coaching. See the guidance on the feedback stage in the appendices of the Mentor Handbook for support.

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