

An Introduction to ‘Building Learning Power’

‘Helping young people become better learners’



A Guide for Parents

‘Term on term, year on year, a BLP school breeds young people who are more curious, more willing to take a risk and give it a go, more imaginative, more creative, more thoughtful, more ready, more willing and able to learn with and through others. It’s developing this adventurous spirit that counts.’

Professor Guy Claxton, originator of BLP

What is Learning Power?

Building Learning Power (BLP) is an approach to learning that we have started to implement at St Thomas More School since September 2018. This approach was created by Professor Guy Claxton. It is based on the idea that we are all capable of becoming better learners. BLP applies this idea directly to the work of teachers in the classrooms, to provide a practical framework for fostering lifelong learning in all young people.

At St Thomas More School, we encourage our children to be the best they can be, recognising that we all have different strengths and interests. BLP allows us to nurture this ethos and build the children's learning power through a variety of strategies and techniques.



Key Principles

- It is a learning culture that encourages children and teachers to become better learners
- It allows children to approach difficulties in learning without fear of failure
- It allows the children to take small steps within learning
- It develops confidence
- It is not additional to teaching but should be grounded within everyday teaching and learning
- It gives clear labels for children to use to develop an understanding of learning processes

Why are we Building Learning Power?

We believe that BLP allows us to develop a common language for learning across the whole school. The language is used in all classrooms, with all children. This helps everyone talk about understanding learning to learn. We hope that this understanding will begin to spill over into life outside school, where you will be able to reinforce the ideas by encouraging the children to use their learning language in their everyday lives.

The idea is that the four dispositions (Guy Claxton calls them the 4 'R's) 'Resilience', 'Resourcefulness', 'Reflectiveness' and 'Reciprocity' are like a group of 'learning muscles'. Just as we can build our physical muscles with the right kind of exercise, learning muscles can also be developed and can grow in strength and stamina. It is these we are aiming to develop in the children.



What does BLP look like?

You may have heard your children already using some of the language and we have started regularly rewarding children in class and in our assemblies for demonstrating good use of our BLP. Professor Claxton suggests there are four main learning dispositions:

- **Resilience** – not giving up
- **Resourcefulness** – being able to use a range of learning strategies and knowing what to do when you get stuck
- **Reflectiveness** – being able to think about yourself as a learner and how you might be able to do this better
- **Reciprocity** – being able to learn with and from others, as well as on your own.

These dispositions are then split into seventeen learning 'muscles' that the children are encouraged to 'stretch' within their everyday lessons and activities and apply to different aspects of their learning.

The Resourcefulness muscle is made up of....

Questioning

Asking questions of yourself and others. Being curious and playful with ideas- delving beneath the surface of things.



Making Links

Seeing connections between events and experiences. Building patterns- weaving a web of understanding.



Imagining

Using your imagination and intuition to put yourself through new experiences or to explore possibilities. Wondering 'what if...?'



Reasoning

Calling up your logical and rational skills to work things out methodically and rigorously; constructing good arguments and spotting the flaws on others.



Capitalising

Drawing on the full range of resources from the wider world- other people, books, the Internet, past experience, future opportunities.



The Reflective muscle is made up of...

Planning

Thinking about where you are going, the action you are going to take, the time and resources you will need and the obstacles you may encounter.



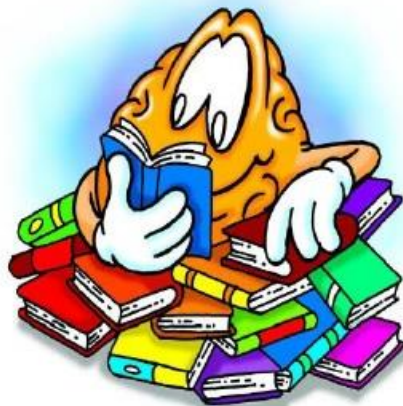
Revising

Being flexible, changing your plans in the light of different circumstances, monitoring and reviewing how things are going and seeing new opportunities.



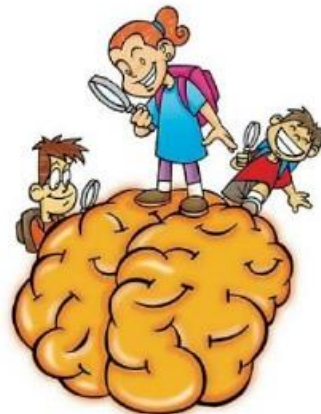
Distilling

Drawing out the lesson from experience, reflecting on the learning and being your own coach.



Meta Learning

Knowing yourself as a learner- how you learn best; how to talk about the learning process.



The Reciprocity muscle is made up of...

Collaboration

Knowing how to manage yourself in the give and take of a collaborative venture, respecting and recognising other viewpoints; adding to and drawing from the strength of teams.



Imitation

Constructively adopting methods, habits or values from other people whom you observe.



Empathy and Listening

Contributing to others' experiences by listening to them to understand what they are really saying and putting yourself in their shoes.



Interdependence

Knowing when it's appropriate to learn on your own or with others, and being able to stand your ground in a debate.



The Resilience muscle is made up of...

Managing Distractions

Recognising and reducing distractions; knowing when to walk away and refresh yourself. Creating your own best environment for learning.



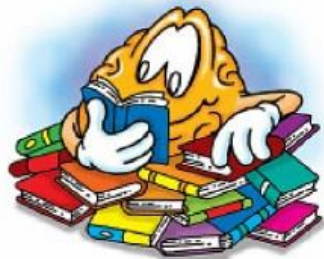
Perseverance

Keeping going in the face of difficulties, channelling the energy of frustration productively. Knowing what a slow and uncertain process learning often is.



Absorption

Being able to lose yourself in learning-becoming absorbed in what you are doing; rapt and attentive, in a state of 'flow'.



Noticing

Perceiving subtle nuances, patterns and details in experience.



How can you help at home?



Draw attention to, and model, positive learning habits

<p><u>Resilience</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate/model sticking at things even if they are difficult ▪ Allow them to fail ▪ Talk about how you feel when you are taking on challenges ▪ Praise your child when they persevere but also encourage them to take a break when they have had enough ▪ Help them to find interests and activities that are really absorbing ▪ Talk to them about what helps them to concentrate and manage distractions
<p><u>Resourcefulness</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage questions, but rather than answering them, respond with phrases like 'what do you think?', or 'how could we find out more?' ▪ Demonstrate making links between different ideas ▪ Don't allow your child's imagination to shrivel up, let them be 'bored' to encourage them to find activities to amuse themselves ▪ Help them to find ways of using resources such as reference books, dictionaries and the Internet
<p><u>Reflectiveness</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage them to take responsibility for preparing for school ▪ Ask not what they did at school but what they learned, or what they found interesting/humorous/challenging ▪ Help them to think about, and plan, activities ▪ Encourage flexibility and the ability to change a plan if necessary
<p><u>Reciprocity</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate/model being a good learner ▪ Work, play and learn alongside your children, enabling them to pick up good habits through imitation ▪ Make expectation of turn-taking and co-operation clear