

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Context</p>	<p>Lesson Study has a reputation for being a very specific approach to classroom action research. The approach focuses on the development of Teaching and Learning and pedagogy. This approach has been in used in Japan since 1870; pre-dating action research as we know it, by 70 years.</p> <p>Lesson Study involves groups of teachers working together to collaboratively plan, teaching, observing and analysing Learning and Teaching in ‘research lessons’. At The Priory School we are trying to embed a culture of collaborative planning so this approach fitted well with our ethos. Teachers work in groups of three, or Triads, over a ‘cycle’ of research lessons; the approach has collaboration and peer to peer support at its core which reinforces the work we already do in school. The expectation is that there are clear outcomes to the research and that Teachers share best practice with colleagues and publish a paper reporting back on how it will influence their practice.</p> <p>Lesson Study is a well-established approach in this country used in Primary schools, Secondary schools and universities.</p> <p><u>During a Lesson, a Triad (or a pair can work) will:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree a focus for the pupil learning and progress. This agreement must be made collaboratively and be routed in data collected about a specific group or subgroup of children• Collaboratively identify an area of improvement that addressees that focus• Identify around three ‘case pupils’ appropriate to that focus - for example high, middle or lower attaining in the class• Joint plan a ‘research lesson’ which focuses on the agreed area for improvement and also focuses on the three key students• Teach and observe the lesson focusing on the three agreed students’ learning• Conduct an interview with the student and gauge their perception of how the lesson went• Schedule a lesson discussion analysing the student voice and the way in which the teacher and observer felt the child/ren progressed• Share the outcomes and best practice with other teachers – in a presentation and record your findings as a piece of action research. <p>Our Lesson Study consisted of three teachers within the triad: one Business specialist, Carol France (CAF), one History specialist, Wes Jones (WJO) and one English specialist, Pete Stacey (PWS), all working at Secondary level.</p> <p>Teachers within the triad are recommended to be brought together from different subject backgrounds in order to offer depth, breadth and variety of</p>
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	<p>approach; it can also mean that the commentary provided is a more subjective - more pedagogically focused rather than content or subject driven.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Section one – Purpose and Aims</p>	<p>It was decided early on that the focus for the triad needed to be centred on the experiences of Pupil Premium students within the school. Historically, although attainment in Pupil Premium students at The Priory School has been progressively improving and (at the time of writing) has stabilised into a period of consistency, this particular sub-group of students still regularly under-perform in comparison to non-Pupil Premium students. We initially wanted to explore the link between Pupil Premium attainment and poor attendance, with the two often going hand-in-hand. However, following our first observation, the focus then moved onto the impact of communication, which we felt would provide a long-term project that might have a significant impact on the school.</p> <p>As a triad and after scrutiny of the class data, we carefully chose students, of varying profiles, to focus upon. One was a female Year 9 student who had only joined the school last year, Pupil Premium, who has historical attendance issues and a tendency to request to leave classrooms, citing medical issues as the cause. The other students were three Year 8 students, all Pupil Premium who were taught within the same Business class – a girl of higher ability, a girl of middle ability and a boy of lower ability.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to draw the way that students communicate, and the tools that we provide to help him, within a lesson. All students require assistance of some degree when it comes to communicating with others, either from the perspective of the teacher trying to ‘guide’ the thinking of students towards a particular outcome, or from the perspective of a student who is simply trying to connect their peers. As professionals, we had questions about this: do we take for granted the affluent, well-balanced, wholly English-speaking background of our students, when we could be doing more to encourage stronger forms of communication?</p>

<p>Section 2 – implementation, innovation, evidence, risks and issues</p>	<p>In order to carry out the lesson observation we used the guidance and suggested structure, within a lesson study resource booklet provided during CPD and Lesson Study support sessions with an allocated member of SLT. Research and information online was also of support and enabled us to look at the way in which other triads were managed in different contexts. There was also a continuing professional dialogue across triads which was further facilitated by Lesson Study drop in's.</p> <p>To reduce costs, we mostly observed during free periods thus removing the need for cover which was, for this academic year, stretched at unprecedented levels. We also met during lunch times with the same objective. All three of us volunteered for this opportunity as we wanted to improve our own practice and embraced the opportunity to work with colleagues across the curriculum. The triad itself was a very supportive one; there was a necessary element of trust and everyone within the triad conducted themselves in a professional and focused manner. Dialogue was open and honest, focused on student progress and performance and student need; it was an unusual opportunity, and one that could have held risk, but due to the make-up of the triad it was hugely beneficial.</p>
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<p>Section 3 – impact of the work</p>	<p>During the observation of the first class, an English class, it became clear and noted by CAF and WJO as observers as the lesson progressed that our Year 9 student was engaged and making progress. Writing was noted as being well-structured and the student was accessing the differentiated materials that were provided for the purpose of developing thinking and writing skills. However, although CAF observed the student working well she was observed as being <i>‘unable to communicate ideas to others – unable to initiate conversation.’</i> This became the key thread that informed the rest of the study, the idea that although the student was making progress and accessing materials, there was an oversight from the teacher: an assumption had been made that the student knew how to communicate with her peers, start a conversation and develop talk in order to make further progress.</p> <p>Following the first lesson, we disregarded our first set of research and focused more on a concept outlined by Caroline Sherwood in her paper ‘some effective principals of effective Pupil Premium teaching’. One strand of Sherwood’s study that we felt matched our own initial findings was that that PP students display a kind of ‘Learned Helplessness’ - a reluctance to contribute, and showing themselves to be apathetic and withdrawn.</p> <p>Our second observation as a triad of a History lesson confirmed that there were issues of communication in the Year 9 student, despite being seating next to close peers and despite the student showing clear signs of progress since joining the school. It must be noted that at this stage of the Lesson Study, the second lesson may be planned collaboratively by the members of the triad in order to trial new ideas. This wasn’t the case for us, as we were seeking more evidence that there were communication issues in our Pupil Premium student.</p> <p>The progressive movement as a triad came in the third lesson, which we planned collaboratively to an extent, sharing all of our expereicne in communication methods. In addition, the decision was made to observe and trial the strategies with a different group of students in Year 8 (partly due to timetable restrictions) which had been identified as having similar communication problems. We wanted to test a range of strategies with a range of students to see whether there was any longevity in the study.</p> <p>For the third observation, CAF designed and delivered a lesson that offered tightly controlled working conditions for student, with a focus on methods of communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence starters for verbalising ideas in pairs/groups – colour coded for challenge. • Numbering students to create a structure to talk. • Strict 30 second periods of talk. <p>The observation notes of PWS state that ‘there was a clear, stronger sense of engagement when the students had better communication ‘tools’ to work with.’</p>
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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Section four – Disseminating impact and system learning</p>	<p>When talking to students at the end of the third observation lesson, a range of comments were taken. Students said that they <i>spoke 'more than [they] normally would have'</i> because <i>'the opportunity was there'</i>.</p> <p>Higher-Ability student 'K' wanted extra time to express all of her ideas, finding the 30 second time limit to be restrictive. The argument was made however that this student could perhaps begin the process of being succinct in her ideas, learning to select her most effective ideas for communication. From this, it was seen that control over communication offered a route to progress not just to lower ability students, but higher too.</p> <p>CAF taught same lesson the following day and removed the timer – students began dominating the conversation again, justifying the work that we were trialling.</p> <p>In terms of dealing with Sherwood's notion of a 'Learned Helplessness', we have seen that control over communication methods, as well as the content and pacing of a lesson could make a significant impact on Pupil Premium students. Reflecting on the work produced in the study, the triad conceded that confidence in communication from PP students comes from three directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offering the tools to communicate (e.g. Colour-coded sentence strands)• Allocating roles or numbers to speak• Using timers to control those surrounding the 'weaker' students. <p>Although not wholly conclusive as a study, the idea that using one, or a combination of these strategies for communication may result in stronger outcomes for students, although it has to be noted that the strategies need to be used regularly and be embedded in the practice of the teacher, as well as noting the effectiveness of the strategies at Key Stage 3, clearing a path for greater communication at Key Stage 4.</p>
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