

# Growth Mindset



“No matter how many mistakes you make or how slow you progress. You’re still way ahead of everyone who isn’t trying.”

Tony Robbins

At Fox Covert Primary School we are developing a Growth Mindset Learning Culture where pupils and staff embrace challenges, value mistakes as part of the learning process, build resilience and believe that through hard work, perseverance and increased effort anything is possible. We want all pupils to hold the belief that ability and talent can be 'developed' with the right attitude.

### Our Journey

We began our journey by exploring the research from Stanford University Development Psychologist, Carol Dweck, who explains the impact that promoting a Growth Mindset Culture can have on all learners:

"In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that, and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never look dumb. In a growth mindset students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can be Einstein, but they believe everyone can get smarter if they work at it."

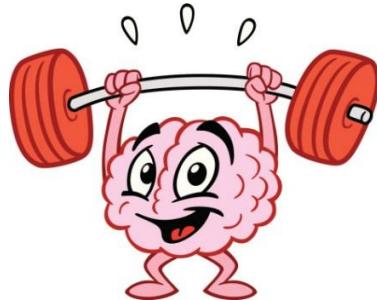
### Reflecting on our own mindset

We began our journey to cultivating a Growth Mindset culture by reflecting on our own fixed and growth mindset traits. The important message we wanted to take from this is that mindsets can change and we can train ourselves to adopt a growth mindset which is an important message for our pupils to learn.

Fixed Mindset Traits		Growth Mindset Traits
Something you're born with Fixed	Skills	Come from hard work Can always improve
Challenges are avoided Tend to give up easily	Challenges	Should be embraced An opportunity to learn Will persist
Unnecessary Want to find things easy	Effort	Is essential A path to acquiring new skills
Feel threatened by feedback and may avoid it altogether Constructive criticism can be seen as a reason quit Take it personally	Feedback	An opportunity to learn Embraced Identifies areas to improve
Blame others Get discouraged	Setbacks	An opportunity to learn Try another strategy
Are failures Hide and cover them up	Mistakes	Temporary setbacks Something to be overcome

## The Science of How we Learn

"Picture your brain forming new connections as you meet the challenge and learn. Keep on going."  
Dweck



Our next step was to explore the remarkable, plasticity of the brain. We want pupils to know that intelligence is not fixed, it is changeable and that learning physically changes our brains. We have explored this concept by having assemblies where we look at videos about the brain and reading stories like 'Your Fantastic Elastic Brain' by JoAnn Deak. We have also changed the way we talk about learning in our classrooms. Instead of always wanting to find things 'easy' we want pupils to enjoy the feeling of challenge and to feel 'their neurons making connections'. With increased understanding of how the brain changes when we learn something, pupils are more likely to see out the initial feeling of being 'stuck' and persevere because they know that the more they practise a new skill, the stronger the connection in their brain becomes.

## The Power of Yet

We have also reflected on how our language can reinforce fixed mindset traits. Dweck stresses the power of adding 'yet' to the times we say we can't do something and this is something we have been modelling to our pupils. We are all more aware of using language that fosters a growth mindset.

You can watch Dweck describe 'The Power of Yet' by searching on Youtube.

**Change your words...change your mindset!**

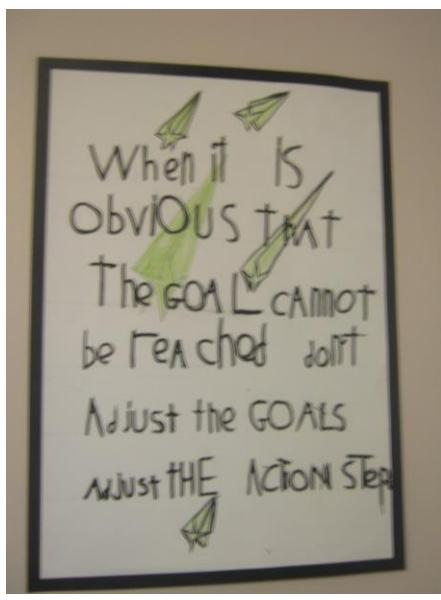


## Praise

"Perhaps the most significant aspect for the teacher in developing a growth mindset culture is to use praise language which focuses on achievement and effort." Shirley Clarke

As a staff, we aim to praise children's effort, process and commitment rather than talent or intelligence. We want our praise to emphasise the importance of effort, perseverance, resilience and the use of different strategies, as opposed to intelligence. It is important pupils know that just because they do not get something straight away, they should not give up. Phrases and approaches that staff are using include:

- "You worked really hard on that today and tried several strategies before you asked for help."
- "I can see you have really been practising... what an improvement."
- "Well done you have used your feedback to move forward."
- "Great! You have identified next steps in your learning and I can see you are having a go."
- "You have really challenged yourself today."
- "What a magical mistake – what have you learned from it?"
- "Have a go."



## How can you help cultivate a Growth Mindset?

Encourage risk-taking and making mistakes

Talk about effort, perseverance and the importance of stretching ourselves

Give feedback on the process rather than just the final result

Have a daily chat about learning

## Model a growth mindset

"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning." – Carol Dweck

### Impact so Far

I really do not want to do this.  
But I'm going to challenge myself."

Kyle P7

When I find something hard I practise really hard at home. I like to challenge myself.

Maja P4

We're using growth mindset traits to problem solve. Feedback isn't always easy to hear but it helps us learn.

P6

"You're a natural at skiing."  
"Nah – I was listening to your instructions and took on your advice." (Kieran ...P7 Camp)

Our model keeps falling over, again and again. We're not giving up though. We're working as a team to find ways to make it better."

Ava and Harry P2

Mindsets play an important role in learning. Already we are starting to see attitudes towards learning changing. Pupils are more resilient to making mistakes, they are seeking opportunities to challenge themselves, embracing opportunities to grow and are more reflective of how and what they are learning.

"Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious...and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Walt Disney