

# TOWARDS A GROWTH MINDSET

## BOOKLET FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

### Focused Fox

concentrates by...



Managing distractions  
Working step by step  
Thinking & planning  
Drawing & making jottings

### Don't Give Up Dory

finds success by...



Working hard and practising  
Persevering  
Trying new strategies  
Asking for help

### Cooperative Caterpillar

works with others by...

Listening carefully

Being a good talk partner

Taking turns

Respecting others' thoughts



### Curious Camel

likes...

Asking 'What if?' questions

Looking for patterns

Making connections

Noticing everything



### Have a go Hedgehog

remembers to...



Take risks

Learn from mistakes

Stay positive

Do the best they can

### Imaginative Insect

likes...



Being creative

Thinking up new ideas

Exploring & investigating

Surprising others

### Improving Impala

gets better by...

Reviewing work often

Using S.C. effectively

Learning from others

Building on success



### Burning for Learning Leopard

enjoys...

Feeling proud of their work

Using learning in real life

Knowing effort = success

Being engaged & motivated



January 2018

## Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to explain the approach we are taking towards learning at Gillespie. Over the last six years we have developed, implemented and worked hard to embed a coherent and consistent vision for teaching and learning. This has been influenced in part by research of educational experts, namely, Dylan William, Paul Black, Carol Dweck and Shirley Clarke. The research highlights the importance of pupils being active participants in the learning process.

We have engaged children as active partners in their own learning through a range of learning and assessment strategies which foster deeper learning and enable children to make rapid and excellent progress. Children are involved dynamically at all stages in the learning process.

*'All learners need self-belief and the ability to reflect on how they learn for that learning to be successful', Shirley Clarke 2011*

To ensure active engagement by children has the maximum impact, we want to ensure that the learning culture is one that fosters a can-do attitude where children are keen to take risks, are happy to make mistakes and embrace challenge. Over the last year or so we have explicitly worked on encouraging children to develop a growth mindset. This booklet will provide more information about the concept of a growth mindset as well as provide ideas for how you can support your child with this at home.

## Background

Growth mindset is simply an approach to learning in school and life beyond. The principles come from years of research by Dr Carol Dweck of Stanford University. Her work points to people having two mindsets: growth or fixed. A child's beliefs about intelligence and ability are important factors in whether they become an effective learner. What do they perceive as 'intelligence'? These thoughts can affect their self-belief and their willingness to persevere and try to improve.



*"In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents etc are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time or 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 become Einstein, but they believe everyone can get better if they work at it."*

**Dr Carol Dweck**

## At Gillespie

We realise that most children will have a mixture of mindsets in different aspects of their life. Many teachers recognise the description of fixed mindset learners who are scared to contribute to class discussion for fear of getting something wrong and 'looking stupid'; who find an area of maths tricky and decide they are just not good at any maths, will fail regardless and so give up; who would rather not try something new and unknown for fear they will be unable to do it successfully; who continue using the same approach in their learning even when it's not working rather than try to be creative or find a different solution because that feels 'too hard'.

Developing a growth mindset can help to remove such 'invisible' barriers to learning as children begin to realise that we can all grow in our abilities through hard work, perseverance and deliberate practice.

Over the last year or so, children at Gillespie have been introduced more explicitly to the concept of mindsets through whole school assemblies and age-appropriate lessons as part of the PSHE curriculum.

## The Impact Praise Can Have on Our Mindset

The vast majority of children love praise and respond well to it. It is an important element of our teaching role to support and encourage pupils and praise is used for this purpose. Children love praise about their intelligence, ability and talent as it gives them a boost and makes them feel good about themselves. Sometimes however, it can reinforce that we expect them to do well, be 'perfect' and always succeed and some children then struggle if they hit a snag. Their confidence can be destroyed and their motivation disappears. Praise such as, 'Wow, you finished so quickly' or 'No mistakes – brilliant!' sends the message that speed and perfection are all we value. If we've reinforced that success means they are 'smart' then mistakes or 'failure' in their eyes must mean they are 'stupid'.



In light of this, we try hard in school to ensure that we avoid **only** praising intelligence and talent and also recognise effort and perseverance. This does not mean that we will not celebrate when children do something well –just that we will **balance** this with the importance of working hard and not giving up and praise this in equal measure.

Learners often worry that doing poorly in one piece of work or making lots of mistakes means they simply cannot and will not ever be able to master that skill or carry out that task. The message to them is that they may not be able to do it YET!

## Praise Which Encourages a Growth Mindset & Supports Learning

At Gillespie we use language to promote a growth mindset.

Phrases & approaches we aim to use include ones like:

- “You were really focused on the task and your improvement shows it.”
- “I like the way you tried different strategies until you finally got it to work.”
- “Everyone learns in different ways. Let’s keep trying till we find the way that works for you.”
- “That piece of work is really good! Tell me about how you did it –maybe we can share your ideas and strategies with others.”
- “It’s good how you keep trying- don’t worry that you haven’t got it yet!”

Colour merits are given as rewards to children using specific language linked to effective learning behaviours. In October 2017, children from Nursery to Year 6 designed and created their own animal to illustrate characteristics of effective learning. These are displayed in all classrooms and around school and are shown below:

<p><b>Focused Fox</b> concentrates by...</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Managing distractions</li><li>Working step by step</li><li>Thinking &amp; planning</li><li>Drawing &amp; making jottings</li></ul>	<p><b>Don't Give Up Dory</b> finds success by...</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working hard and practising</li><li>Persevering</li><li>Trying new strategies</li><li>Asking for help</li></ul>
<p><b>Cooperative Caterpillar</b> works with others by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listening carefully</li><li>Being a good talk partner</li><li>Taking turns</li><li>Respecting others' thoughts</li></ul> 	<p><b>Curious Camel</b> likes...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Asking 'What if?' questions</li><li>Looking for patterns</li><li>Making connections</li><li>Noticing everything</li></ul> 
<p><b>Have a go Hedgehog</b> remembers to...</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Take risks</li><li>Learn from mistakes</li><li>Stay positive</li><li>Do the best they can</li></ul>	<p><b>Imaginative Insect</b> likes...</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Being creative</li><li>Thinking up new ideas</li><li>Exploring &amp; investigating</li><li>Surprising others</li></ul>
<p><b>Improving Impala</b> gets better by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reviewing work often</li><li>Using S.C. effectively</li><li>Learning from others</li><li>Building on success</li></ul> 	<p><b>Burning for Learning Leopard</b> enjoys...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feeling proud of their work</li><li>Using learning in real life</li><li>Knowing effort = success</li><li>Being engaged &amp; motivated</li></ul> 

## Developing a Growth Mindset – THINK

INSTEAD OF...	TRY THINKING...
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
This is too hard	This may take some time
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me to learn
I just can't do this	I am going to train my brain
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
Plan A didn't work	There's always plan B
My friend can do it	I will learn from them

### How Can You Help With This at Home?

The good news is that mindsets can be changed. This approach may be helpful in many areas of our lives, not just at school. As you can imagine, a key part of developing a growth mindset is in hearing consistent messages from everyone involved. Receiving growth mindset messages at home will undoubtedly help to further embed these beliefs in your child.

*"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning. Parents should not shield their children from challenges, mistakes, and struggles. Instead parents should teach children to love challenges. They should teach their children to embrace mistakes. And they should teach them to love effort: "That was a fantastic struggle. You really stuck to it and made great progress".*

**Dr. Carol Dweck**

Which mindset do you believe is closest to yours?

Which do you think your child displays?

Is this different in different situations?

Which mindset do you model?



### Praise effort, perseverance, motivation and strategies – Give Process Praise

- Well done –you’re learning to ...
- You’re finding it hard? Good –it’s making you think –that’s how your brain is growing!
- Every time you practise, you’re making the connections in your brain even stronger.
- Be brave. Have another go. Maybe this time you could try...
- You’ve worked hard on this and you’ve succeeded because ...
- You’ve sounded that word out really carefully using your phonics.
- You can use this mistake. Think about why it didn’t work and learn from it.

### Show an interest and ask open-ended questions:

- Tell me about it; show me more
- How did you do that?
- How many ways did you try before it turned out the way you wanted?
- Are you pleased with it? What do you think will happen if.....?

### Encourage your child to take a risk:

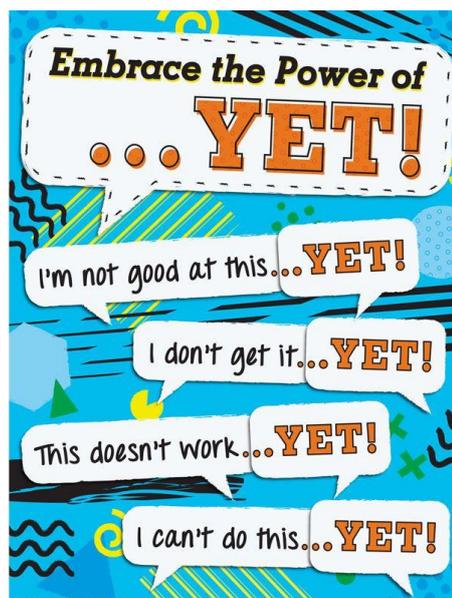
Gently nudge your child to push themselves and see challenge as a positive part of their learning. When possible encourage them to try things that seem ‘just out of reach’. Children need to work just outside of their comfort zone to learn effectively.

### Try to model a Growth Mindset yourself:

Let your child know when you are finding something difficult or frustrating but narrate your inner thoughts as you keep working through it. Try to avoid labelling yourself in a fixed mindset way – telling your child that you were rubbish at maths gives a message that you are either good at maths or not good at maths and there’s nothing that can be done about this. It leads them to believe their failure in that area is predetermined. We want them to see they can make progress. A better comment would be ‘I found maths tricky at school too but if you keep trying and learning from your mistakes I know you will improve.’

### See mistakes as opportunities to learn something new

Mistakes happen. Show your child that there is something to be learned when we don’t achieve what we set out to accomplish. Encourage them to think of different strategies and to try again. Talk about what has worked in the past or for others. When they do learn from a mistake, celebrate this!



# PARENT'S GUIDE TO A GROWTH MINDSET

## Big Life Journal

[www.biglifejournal.com](http://www.biglifejournal.com)

### PRAISE

FOR:

EFFORT  
STRATEGIES  
PROGRESS  
HARD WORK  
PERSISTENCE  
RISING TO A CHALLENGE  
LEARNING FROM A MISTAKE



NOT FOR:

BEING SMART  
BORN GIFTED  
TALENT  
FIXED ABILITIES  
NOT MAKING MISTAKES

SAY:

"YOU TRIED VERY HARD AND YOU USED THE RIGHT STRATEGY!"  
"WHAT A CREATIVE WAY TO SOLVE THAT PROBLEM."



### BRAIN CAN GROW

SAY:

"YOUR BRAIN IS LIKE A MUSCLE. WHEN YOU LEARN, YOUR BRAIN GROWS. THE FEELING OF THIS BEING HARD IS THE FEELING OF YOUR BRAIN GROWING!"



GROWTH MINDSET  
YOU CAN  
GROW YOUR  
INTELLIGENCE

VS

FIXED MINDSET  
YOU CAN'T  
IMPROVE  
NATURAL ABILITIES  
YOU WERE  
BORN WITH



### FAILURES AND MISTAKES = LEARNING

SAY:

"YOU CAN LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES."  
"MISTAKES HELP YOU IMPROVE."  
"LET'S SEE WHAT OTHER STRATEGIES YOU CAN TRY."

### ASK

"WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY THAT MADE YOU THINK HARD?"  
"WHAT NEW STRATEGIES DID YOU TRY?"  
"WHAT MISTAKE DID YOU MAKE THAT TAUGHT YOU SOMETHING?"  
"WHAT DID YOU TRY HARD AT TODAY?"



### THE POWER OF "NOT YET"

SAY:

"YOU CAN'T DO IT YET."  
"YOU DON'T KNOW IT YET."  
"BUT IF YOU LEARN AND PRACTICE, YOU WILL!"

RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN MINDSET BE MINDFUL OF YOUR OWN THINKING AND OF THE MESSAGES YOU SEND WITH YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS.



BASED ON CAROL DWECK'S BOOK "MINDSET: THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS"