



School of Education  
Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences  
St Luke's Campus  
EXETER EX1 1TE  
UK

Email [dave.walters@groundedpractice.co.uk](mailto:dave.walters@groundedpractice.co.uk)  
Web <https://education.exeter.ac.uk/>

**Report following the analysis and evaluation of evidence submitted by Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School for the purpose of accreditation as a Thinking School by Thinking Schools @Exeter, School of Education, University of Exeter, UK.**

**Starting point: the school context.**

Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is a small, highly inclusive, and child-centred primary school with 180 pupils on roll (ages 3-11). The school is situated in an area of high deprivation and specific learning challenges lie in the development of metacognitive awareness and independent learning skills. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is a member of the highly successful Thinking Schools Network (TSN) and has a rapidly growing trajectory of Thinking School development. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is totally committed to developing a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking in a responsive and adaptive manner. As such, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is positioned as one of the new key members of the international Thinking School community. The school's vision to create an environment where children learn and grow together to realise their full potential is captured by a clear mission to promote a caring community where teamwork, creativity, excitement, and happiness thrive. Clearly this has the aim of transforming life chances and cultural capital. This is further illustrated by Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's values:

- Aspiration
- Curiosity
- Resilience
- Respect
- Kindness.

This undoubtedly demonstrates Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's focus on child-centred learning. The core values are operationalised via a sharply focused curriculum that prioritises Active Learning, Basic Skills, and Creative Thinking. Indeed, the Forest School and OPAL School initiatives facilitate this well due to the emphasis on direct application of knowledge and understanding.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has pursued its Thinking School development with determination and care. This has subsequently secured observable development due to the devotion to inclusion and the embracement of diversity. This is illustrative of an inclusive school where every individual is encouraged to achieve their full potential via the pursuit of a rich and full educational experience.

---

<sup>1</sup> School's website, reflective proforma and digital evidence

In aligning the school's ethos and values to a metacognitive developmental process via careful attention to holistic lifelong learning, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has ensured that the Thinking School approach is an integral part of the learning culture of the school. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School achieves good holistic pupil outcomes as demonstrated by a wealth of robust indicators. In addition to working towards being a Thinking School, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is pursuing the OPAL School Platinum Award in order to celebrate excellence in the area of outdoor play and learning. This is indicative of an educational provision that serves the wider needs of all pupils. Indeed, the educational provision extends pupils' learning and understanding via an imaginative focus on real-life application. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is rated 'Good' by its most recent Ofsted report which celebrates the school's all-round educational provision and its kind, calm, and purposeful learning atmosphere. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is clearly a school that prides itself in achieving and maintaining the highest educational standards via a 'human' and fully inclusive provision. For example, the school has an excellent reputation for fully supporting pupils through its curriculum, pastoral system, and enrichment offering. As such, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has created a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere where thinking and learning are not only nurtured but also thrive.<sup>2</sup>

Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's cognitive education development journey has moved forward with focus and purpose. Subsequently, a thread of training has been in place via collaboration with a local Research School and the Thinking Schools Network. Parental engagement is a key priority for the school and a comprehensive Parental Engagement Strategy is in place.<sup>3</sup> There is a strong sense of the 'why' and 'how' elements of pedagogy being pivotal to the work of the school. With reference to this, the school seeks to prepare pupils as confident, creative, adaptable, and resilient thinkers so that they become committed lifelong learners.<sup>4</sup> Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has embedded thinking and metacognitive approaches in whole-school aspects of educational provision in order to ensure that its vision, mission, and values are a reality. High quality CPD has done much to secure a cohesive staff team, and there is a real sense of collaboration at all levels. The support of the TSN and 'external' consultancy is a notable feature and fully embraces core educational principles and contextual individuality.<sup>5</sup>

## **Evidence Base**

Thinking Schools @Exeter received the school's submission for accreditation from Emma McGrenaghan (Headteacher) and Chris Blackburn (Assistant Headteacher/Thinking Skills Coordinator/Drive Team Lead) evidencing the history of the school's cognitive education development journey and the work that the school has undertaken since the journey began. The evidence for accreditation is woven into the reflective proforma and includes links to a comprehensive evidence base, all of which are linked to the 15 criteria and accreditation rubric. The evidence on the school's website includes visual information relating to how Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School not only teaches thinking, but also how the school

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Digital evidence

<sup>4</sup> School's website, reflective proforma and digital evidence

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

has developed this aspect as part of its educational culture. The website also includes key indicators of metacognitive approaches in the classroom. This includes Memory Games, Graphic Organisers, Leitner Learning to Learn Techniques, Knowledge Mats, and Science of Learning Principles. As such, there is a clear aim to make thinking and learning visible. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has linked this well to its vision, mission, and values.

### **Thinking School Ethos and Culture**

From the evidence presented, it is clear that Thinking Skills are embedded within the culture of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School. Curriculum policy documents and plans clearly map out a thinking strategy that subsequently feed into teaching strategies, and so moves thinking approaches from policy to practice. Pivotal to this is the high premium placed on sharing of best practice across the school to include all staff. The focus and attention given to evidence informed professional inquiry is an excellent example of the school's pursuit of criticality, creativity, and innovation.<sup>6</sup>

Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has a prominent and visible thinking culture, and this is due to the excellent organisational structure and visual presentation. The school's website and illustrative materials exemplify the prominence of a thinking culture. High quality communications with parents ensure that the thinking partnership between the school and parents develops with purpose. Indeed, the Parental Engagement Strategy is illustrative of the school's commitment to working in strong collaboration. Parents receive information about 'being' a Thinking School and also get a wealth of support in order to encourage the application of Thinking Skills. Assemblies and other public forums provide rich opportunities to share children's thinking successes. The high premium placed on celebration and displays further strengthen the Thinking School ethos and culture. As a consequence of these actions, the learning community is equipped to support children's holistic development.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has forged a number of partnerships underpinned by a Thinking School focus within the local community, Thinking School community and more widely. Teachers regularly collaborate with other schools. The excellent collaboration enables best practice to permeate throughout the wider school community. Through its connections with a range of stakeholders, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School conveys a positive, caring and creative atmosphere, demonstrating that careful thought has been put into its organisational structure and visual presentation. This is evidenced well.<sup>8</sup>

### **Senior Management and Whole School Commitment**

The Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher (Thinking School Coordinator/Drive Team Lead), give full commitment to both the Thinking School ethos and the implementation of the cognitive development agenda. This has cascaded to leadership throughout the school and the purposeful and developmental structure provides an excellent platform for continued improvement. Indeed, although small, the Drive Team is comprised of a rich blend of

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

expertise and influence. There is a clear focus on professional growth that feeds into the impactful School Development Plan. The Assistant Headteacher (Thinking School Coordinator/Drive Team Lead) provides excellent support and feedback based on an audit of the key accreditation elements. These are evidenced well.<sup>9</sup> Governors are regularly kept up to date about the school's approaches to cognitive education through thorough reports and Governor visits. Feedback indicates a positive shift in pupils' thinking skills together with whole school development as a Thinking School.<sup>10</sup>

The Headteacher and Assistant Headteachers provide excellent leadership to support the school's commitment to developing a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking. Modelling and coaching are key features of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's pedagogic practice, and communications are excellent as are planning processes including meetings and subsequent developmental actions. Together, these aspects ensure that there is continued dialogue about Thinking Skills so that specific areas of development can be identified and acted upon.<sup>11</sup> There is ample evidence to indicate that Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is receptive to change and innovation. Indeed, contextual challenges are met with care and insight. The development of cognitive approaches has been part of the school's vision and drive for improvement for a number of years in response to ensuring that the school has an explicit vision based upon inclusive and holistic educational values. The application for accreditation has reinforced this commitment. In this way, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has retained its unique characteristics whilst also embracing change and innovation.

There is a specific organic School Development Plan designed to secure the wide-spread use of Thinking Tools across the school. The range of cognitive developments indicates that plans are aspirational and designed to empower children to progressively take ownership of their cognitive development.<sup>12</sup> Also, plans and CPD provision dovetail well and provide a clear mechanism for ongoing development.

## **Learning and Teaching**

It is clear, from the documentation provided, that Thinking Skills are embedded within the culture of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School. The school's Learning and Teaching approach is built on evidence-based metacognitive principles spanning Metacognition and Thinking Processes (including the Science of Learning). The inclusion of Spaced-Practice geared towards the improvement of memory retention via Leitner's Learning to Learn concepts is a particularly innovative element in this respect. These aspects are explicitly shared with all pupils and are also adapted to suit the particular learning context of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School. For example, a number of metacognitive elements have been adapted to include the school's own particular foci including Forest School and OPAL School dimensions. The integration of elements is an excellent example of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's application of its pedagogic vision. Assemblies reinforce these

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Reflective Proforma, School Website and Evidence Links

elements which also feature prominently in the school's Pupil Voice via the Pupil Parliament. Indeed, a range of reinforcing stimuli emphasise key metacognitive elements in order to raise the profile of strategy application, reflection, and self-regulation. All pupils receive specific training in the use and application of cognitive tools. Reflection, peer assessment, and self-assessment are intrinsic to the school's thinking, teaching, and learning developments. This compliments other reflective processes such as staff self-reflections on the implementation of the school's thinking culture. In this regard, there is a clear reflective focus on what works best, for whom and how. This, aligned to excellent leadership and communication, ensures that good practice is shared judiciously with all staff to develop their classroom impact. There is a universal staff belief in the importance of taking a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking and that all pupils are capable of making progress. This further supports the school's commitment to cognitive education. This demonstrates how it is one of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's main aims.<sup>13</sup>

Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's pedagogical approach is informed by clear development planning and CPD underpinned by a firm foundation of research and evidence. This sound research evidence base has allowed learning and teaching to move forward with purpose, coherence and impact. The emphasis placed on the curriculum and learning environment is also clearly illustrated in the evidence provided by the school. The integrated approach to curriculum design is an excellent platform for promoting interleaving and 'range' in terms of pupils' wider learning. These elements, combined with Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School's commitment to the nurturing of personal development and well-being, have resulted in learning and teaching that is focused on the holistic development of every child.<sup>14</sup>

There is a real sense of staff adopting the role of Mediators of Learning and being Reflective Practitioners. The aim is clearly to develop a learning approach where higher order thinking qualities are not only nurtured but are also given the practical opportunities to flourish. Effective use of displays enriches the learning environment by encouraging a common language for learning and fostering self-regulation of thinking and learning. Where feasible, the school has personalised and contextualised visual displays to aid consistency, recognition and application of Thinking Skills. Children are encouraged to strive for high standards through displays of high-quality pieces of work. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has clear evidence of developing learning and teaching and the appreciation of wider elements via the exceptional curriculum provision. This has shifted practice from a teaching approach to a pedagogical culture.<sup>15</sup>

## **Training**

The values-led Headteacher and her team have fully embraced cognitive education and have ensured that finance and resources are geared towards high quality training for all staff. Governors fully endorse this line of school development. Indeed, there is a dedicated Link Governor tasked with assisting the oversight of Thinking School implementation. All staff are

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

well versed in the theory, application and assessment of cognitive education and psychological well-being. The high-quality training has undoubtedly influenced the focus on establishing a common thinking language and approach across the curriculum.<sup>16</sup> There is an ongoing and differentiated training programme in place, aimed at the development of expertise in a range of cognitive tools, strategies and resources for established and newly appointed staff. Drive Team members provide excellent distributed support throughout the school. The school's approach to CPD is one of professional growth and elements such as the Collaborative Coaching Partnership supplemented by Reflective Practice Meetings allow staff to share their expertise widely. There is a clear overview of staff training charting professional development activities relating to Thinking Schools and more widely. The integrated and collaborative approach is excellent. There is a clear appreciation of the voice of pupils and staff. Indeed, the School Parliament is highly influential and drive many initiatives. Parents are fully informed of the Thinking School ethos, which features prominently on the website and in the school's communications. Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively and to provide mutual support through the development of thinking generally and through particular foci. Good practice is shared widely and learning walks are used supportively to evaluate and share good practice in a climate of mutual aspiration. The integrated training approach extends the reach of professional growth, and this has done much to significantly refine the school's thinking culture. Indeed, the school's approach to professional growth is based on a culture of inquiry that draws on current research and external experts. Moving forward, this would benefit from the further extension of practitioner research via the SPARE model, and the Drive Team are well placed to lead on this aspect.

## **Assessment and Outcomes**

Alternative and complimentary forms of assessment spanning the formative, summative and ipsative domains are routinely used to examine the development of cognitive skills, and how these are related to learning outcomes in the wider sense have been implemented. These include observations, classroom artefacts and a range of robust quantitative measures. Reflection is integral to the assessment process at Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School and the voices of staff and pupils are integral. Reflection is aligned closely to peer and self-assessment. The school's application of the Myself as a Learner Scale, including subsequent analysis, is excellent. This takes a baseline and follow-up approach and is highly effective in terms of illustrating rates of growth and future avenues of development foci. Reflection has been skilfully woven into the assessment processes at Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School. Work samples demonstrate the progressive use of Graphic Organisers, Memory Games, and Leitner Spaced-Practice techniques. Assessments indicate largely high cognitive and self-perception development together with signposting strategies for further improvement. Assessment outcomes across a range of indicators show impressive growth over the Thinking Schools implementation period indicating that Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is a supportive and attractive place to learn. For example, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has invested greatly in maximising attendance levels and this is reflected in the impact figures. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School demonstrates excellent complimentary use of qualitative and quantitative indicators, and this is an example

---

<sup>16</sup> Reflective Proforma, School Website and Evidence Links

of excellent practice. The school also demonstrates a healthy 'data informed' (rather than data led) approach to assessment to avoid assessment becoming the master of the curriculum rather than the servant. Assessment at Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School certainly puts the needs of children first.<sup>17</sup>

The school is clear that the focus on cognitive development through a whole school consistent approach to learning has improved children's attitudes, improved their enjoyment, developed their independence, contributed to high quality teaching and led to better pupil progress.<sup>18</sup> There is qualitative data from a range of sources about how the development of learning behaviours is associated with positive outcomes for pupils and excellent intrinsic motivation.

The holistic pupil growth indicates impressive impact. The school's own internal analysis and presentation of these outcomes is clear and reflects a positive achievement trend together with aspiration for further improvement.<sup>19</sup>

### **Evaluation of Programmes**

There is a continual review of the range of cognitive tools, strategies and resources employed, with specific reference to their impact on pupils' meta-cognition and the transfer of skills, strategies and learning behaviours. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School makes explicit use of the SPARE model of Illuminative Evaluation, and outcomes from judicious assessments inform school developments via the excellent School Development Plan process. As a result, quantitative and qualitative data relating to thinking, attitudes, and behaviour are integrated as part of the evaluative process. These evaluations are excellent and draw on a range of indicators. The insightful use of this evaluative evidence is excellent. Evaluations also feed into the excellent inquiry-based school professional growth cycle so that a clear developmental direction is charted. Staff are fully involved in the collation of data and peer observations are particularly impactful in terms of evaluating pedagogy. Of particular note, is the highly effective use of the Pupil Voice in the evaluation process via elements such as the Pupil Parliament. Again, the reflective element is highly effective in this respect. There is a strong collaborative approach to leadership. The inclusion of external experts is a good example of this. As such, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has established a culture of thinking and school improvement built on regular opportunities for staff to discuss the process and efficacy of cognitive education and how it can be maintained and improved. Indeed, the Cycle of Lesson Study is excellent in this respect and has a focus on pupil independence, recall abilities, and the development of pupil resilience. The Collaborative Coaching Partnership process provides an excellent platform for reflecting on the impact of innovations. There is a genuine feel that 'this is the way we do things around here', and this is clear evidence of the drive to create a culture of thinking. Development plans are organic and collaborative where the voices of the entire school community feature prominently in the evaluative process. There is a clear evaluative focus on developing the transfer of Thinking Skills and strategies and the collaborative nature of all evaluative elements is a model of

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Reflective Pro-forma, School Website and Evidence Links

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

excellent practice. As a committed and fully inclusive school, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is well placed for future Thinking School development, and this reflects the ongoing ambition to develop a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking.

## **Ownership**

It is clear that Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has made a full commitment to developing and embedding cognitive education throughout the school. Indeed, the school is rightly proud of its success in terms of embedding initiatives and retaining authenticity and inclusivity. There is evidence that the school has distilled and integrated these practices both in how they are used together and in the way they have become part of the thinking culture throughout the school and across roles and ages. Through the careful and progressive introduction of cognitive tools and CPD geared towards developing teachers as skilled mediators of learning, developments are actioned with noticeable impact. Developments are clearly linked to the school's vision, mission, and values. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School has laid a strong foundation that ensures the whole school approach to the teaching of thinking flourishes. Indeed, progress in developing a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking has been part of the school's developmental journey for a number of years. The external consultancy influence has been valuable and has allowed consistency and individual creativity to flourish due to a high premium placed on the educational context. Together, these elements combine to effectively promote the educational growth of all children and the professional growth of staff by providing them with excellent support and ownership over their own development.

Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is an ambitious, child-centred, family orientated educational community totally committed to embracing diversity in its quest to promote holistic educational provision. As such, Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School places the individual needs and wellbeing of children at the heart of everything it does. Moreover, the school is clear about the contextual challenges it faces, and no stone is left unturned in overcoming barriers to learning. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School provides a fully engaging and reflective educational experience by ensuring that pupils develop their curiosity about the world. Pupils not only know *what* is expected of them, but also understand the *why* elements of their learning. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is led with drive, aspiration, and care at every level and there is an unswerving commitment to preserve the school's vision, mission, and values. Thinking flourishes at Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School because the school truly lives up to its mantra of Learn, Grow, Achieve. As such, the development of cultural capital and strong child-centred family values feature prominently in the work of the school. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is a contextually aware, resilient and highly responsive Thinking School where challenges are met with purpose, care, and aspiration. Plans are fully actioned with the aim of providing a fully inclusive holistic educational experience. Excellent leadership, teaching, and support have the individual needs of every child at its core so that pupils are fully engaged to become holistic lifelong learners. Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School is a wonderful example of an adaptive and transformative Thinking School.



## **Conclusion**

The range of evidence submitted undoubtedly indicates that Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School meets the criteria set by Thinking Schools @Exeter as a Thinking School and demonstrates a true commitment to the continued development of a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking. I therefore recommend that accreditation be awarded until September 2028.

I would like to thank the school for the comprehensive and judicious evidence base, clearly organised around the evaluation rubric, that provided the lens through which the excellent practice could be viewed.

## **Further Recommendations**

I conclude my evaluation with some suggestions as to how the school could continue to develop as a Thinking School to inform a development visit to aid action planning. This might include:

- Continue to further develop and maintain staff development through ongoing external and internal training geared towards rationalising what works best by fine-tuning the already best practice.
- Further integrate thinking processes with questioning, visual tools, dispositional development, deliberate practice routines, assessment of process, assessment of product, evaluation of process and evaluation of product. This could take the form of an overview for how these elements are integrated.
- Further extend lesson observations to include key indicators of learning and thinking processes. These need to be simple, clearly observable and made explicit to all staff. The work of Project Zero (Harvard University) is a particularly useful source in this respect.
- Continue to move from evaluation to Evaluative Research to further foster the development of staff as researching professionals. To gain accreditation as an Advanced Thinking School, researching professionals are expected to offer articles relating to best practice to publications such as the school's magazine, local newspapers, the school website and professional publications. Other forums where impact can be made public are leader/teacher learning communities and action research seminars.
- Consider the use of five key questions for evaluative purposes: What works best? For whom? Under what circumstances? How? Why? These can feed into the 'E' of the SPARE model of evaluative research.
- Use the criteria of an Advanced Thinking School to frame future developments in order to deepen and extend the understanding and expertise of Lawrence View Primary and Nursery School.
- Consider further developing and aligning Thinking Routines (already aligned to Bloom's Taxonomy) with lesson objectives to aid targeted planning and teaching/learning.

- Continue to develop the school's website to further elaborate on metacognitive dimensions.
- Further consider the place of metacognitive approaches in the curriculum design. For example, research has shown that higher levels of impact occur when a 'blended' approach (separate provision *and* integrated in subjects) is taken.



**Dr Dave Walters, BA Ed Hons, MPhil Ed, EdD**  
**Thinking Schools Assessor**  
**Grounded Practice Educational Services**

**On behalf of the University of Exeter, UK**  
**September 2025**