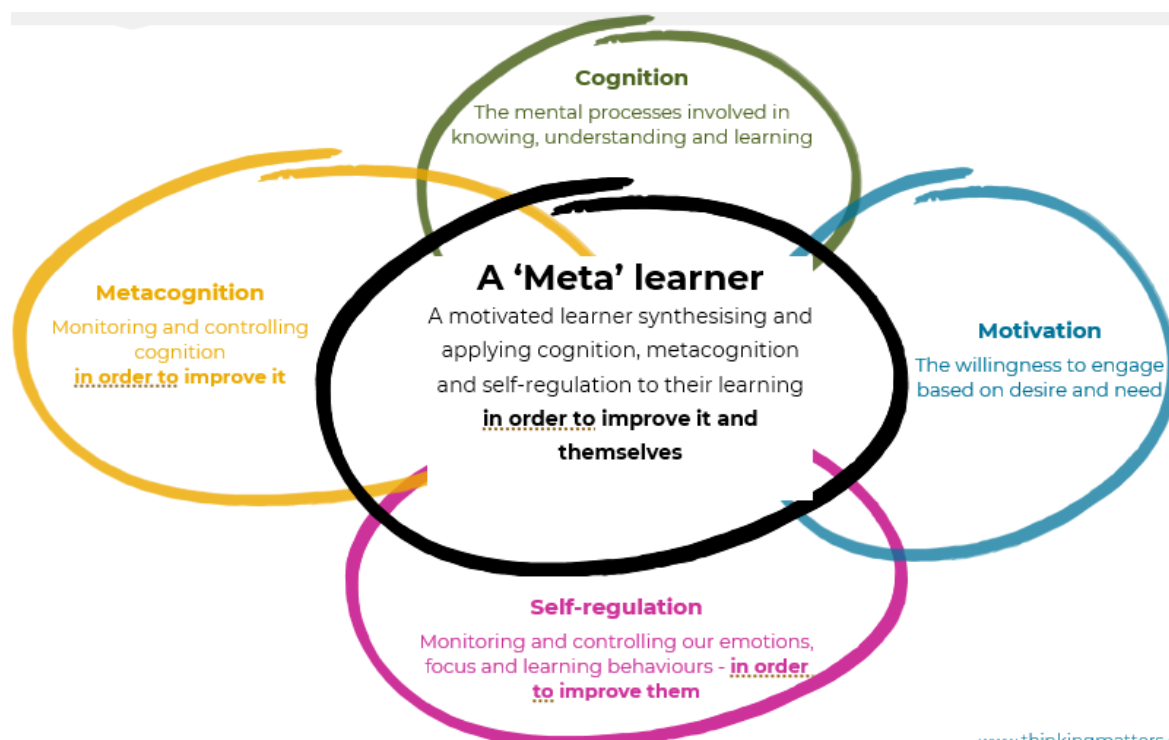


The School Leader's Guide to University of Exeter

Thinking School Accreditation



One of the UK's leading universities, The University of Exeter, via its School of Education, offers formal accreditation for schools wishing to be officially recognised as 'Thinking Schools'. At the heart of the award is whether a school can evidence that it is taking a genuinely whole school-community approach to the development of cognitive, metacognitive, self-regulating, independent learners. We call them 'meta' learners.

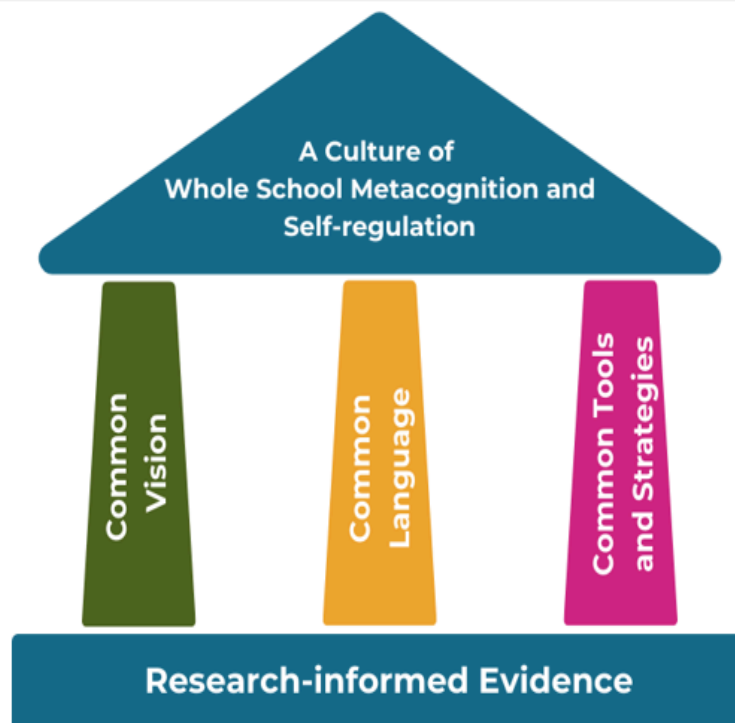


Which Schools can become Thinking Schools?

Accredited Thinking Schools come in all forms: infant, primary, secondary, all-through, special schools, state-funded, independent, and everything in between. Some are part of large trusts or groups; others stand proudly alone. Thinking Schools accreditation originated for UK schools but there are increasing numbers of schools based outside of the UK with the accreditation. The beauty of the pedagogical approach they take is that it can be universally applied, whatever your curriculum. In short, it is open to any school, anywhere.

The Thinking School Concept...

What is common to all Thinking Schools is that they have a culture of developing 'meta' learners that is based on a common vision of what the characteristics of their meta learner are, a common language around how learning happens and a common set of tools and strategies to improve those meta learner characteristics. The whole school community knows the type of learner their pupils are trying to become and a common understanding of how they can become it.

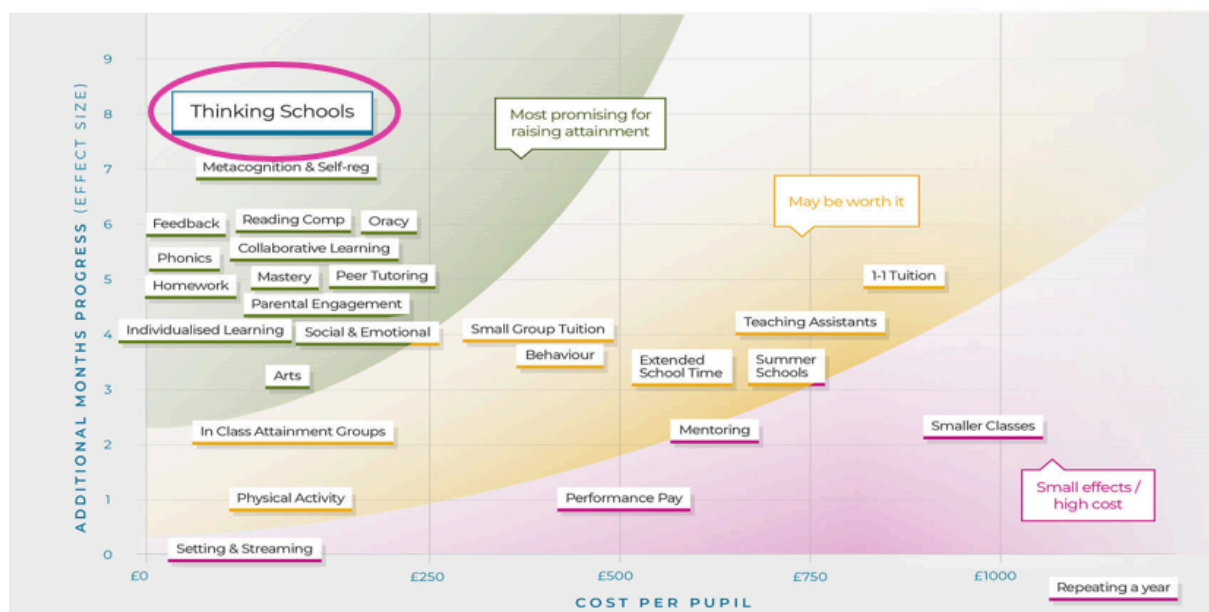


The Benefits of Being a Thinking School...

It's easy to see why an ever-increasing number of schools seek the award.

To Parents: By verifying that it has a culture and focus on developing 'meta' learners - the school is communicating to its current and prospective parent body that it cares not only for the academic outcomes of their children, but in building that academic progress through an evidence-based pedagogy that will also future proof their children in knowing how to be life-long learners and improvers at anything... Learners capable of positively adapting to and thriving in whatever the world beyond the school gates throws at them.

Impact vs Cost: Evidence Based Attainment Strategies



<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>

www.thinkingmatters.com



To Staff: It also demonstrates to the staff body that this is an organisation that is serious about the professional development of its most valuable resource - its people. One of the criteria of the accreditation is that the school can demonstrate it is investing in its staff being trained to understand how cognitive science applies to teaching. Do all staff understand how memory, the emotive brain and the science of motivation work? Can they apply that to their teaching, whatever their subject specialism?

The accreditation's requirement for a Thinking School 'Drive Team' also provides valuable opportunity for staff leadership development and a collective sense of achievement amongst the wider staff body and pupil body on achieving accreditation.

To Students: Perhaps most importantly, it is providing a framework, tools and strategies for learners to, age appropriately, understand how they learn and can improve at whatever they apply the approach towards. Through the culture that comes from being a Thinking School and what is being measured, then irrespective of a learner's starting point it puts progress and the self-ownership of improvement at the heart of their school journey.

To Inspectorates: The accreditation requirements around measuring progress in pupil self-regulation and independent learning provide ready made, evidence based documentation that can be used to meet inspectorate criteria in pupil achievement, self development, pupil agency, thinking or learning skills with OFSTED, ISI, ESYN, ETI, COBIS, KHDA or Approaches to Learning within the IB or Active Learning with the CIS.

Overall: The Exeter Thinking School accreditation and the rigour required to achieve it differentiates schools within a competitive landscape, and is shown to improve staff retention, recruitment and pupil outcomes whilst supporting inspectorate requirements.

The Criteria and Process

There are two levels of Thinking School accreditation, **Level One** – which must be achieved before it is possible to move to Advanced accreditation (**Level Two**). Both levels require a written narrative to be submitted of your school's journey towards developing your whole school 'meta learner' culture. The narrative needs to be supplemented by digital evidence that supports it and meet certain criteria components. Level One criteria cover staff cognitive pedagogy training, assessment of impact, evaluation and a whole school commitment across leadership, wider staff, pupils, parents and governors/directors. The Level Two criteria additionally looks for sharing of practice and deeper research into the impact. The evidence and narrative are all submitted digitally. There is no in-person visit. The digital evidence

is reviewed by the accreditation team at Exeter and if accreditation, of either level, is awarded, it lasts for three years.

The Cost

The cost is decided on by the University of Exeter and is paid to them. They currently charge between GBP1,000-2,000. The exact amount is based on the number of pupils in your school. That fee is the only charge over the three year period over which your accreditation lasts. ***That's an average of £500 per year for a prestigious university endorsement.*** At the end of the three year period you can either decide not to re-accredit, re-accredit at Level One, accredit at Level Two (Advanced) or if you are already Advanced then to re-accredit at Advanced Level.

How does Thinking Matters support you in achieving accreditation?

Due to our longstanding relationship with Exeter and our involvement in the conception of the Thinking School accreditation, we have helped shape the criteria and, in some way, have supported almost all of the schools who have gained Thinking School accreditation since its conception in 2006.

Wherever you are in the world, if you are seeking accreditation as a Thinking School, we offer advice around the process and have developed [simple to use software](#) that aids the gathering and digital submission of evidence - greatly reducing your workload in attaining the award. Our professional development, tools and resources are designed with accreditation as a potential objective. Any school or group of schools considering accreditation should feel confident that we will tailor a [professional development plan](#) for them that, if embedded well, will put you in a position to meet the criteria required to achieve the ThinkingSchools@Exeter awards.

Your Next Step: Request and Accreditation Readiness Review

If you are considering accreditation over the next 12 to 18 months, we would be delighted to offer a complimentary, 10-minute 'Accreditation Readiness Review' call

with an experienced Thinking Matters advisor. During the call we will explore your current practice against Exeter's criteria and outline a practical timeline for your school.

**[CLICK HERE to for a conversation around becoming
an accredited Thinking School](#)**