

UPDATE ON GROWTH MINDSET

Almost a year ago I advised parents that we were going to be pursuing a growth mindset approach to education at Reigate St Mary's. Many of you were extremely keen on this idea as it was a philosophy your companies had adopted, and you had therefore seen the benefits in the workplace. Some parents, however, were anxious assuming that this meant we were doing away with competition and that we would not be challenging children to extend their thinking nor to stretch them academically. I hope that you will all have seen that growth mindset is the absolute opposite of this. In the first instance growth mindset is an approach to education which will encourage children to challenge themselves and want to stretch their own learning. Competitiveness is also at the heart of growth mindset but with children competing with themselves to reach their own personal goals rather than some fixed target which is often dependent on their environment, and this can actually inhibit growth. It is also about metacognition, about learning how to learn rather than just regurgitating facts. The ability to learn and recall facts might help with examinations but it is not of great benefit in a fast changing world. The assumption that there is one answer, a right and a wrong, has limited creativity across the world and can still be seen to limit academic development in schools which are still focussed on 'old rote learning'. If I was interviewing for a position I would rather take on the person who has the ability to seek out, calculate or rationalise an answer, than the person who has simply learned the correct response.

Whilst away at conference I heard a great example of growth mindset. The Professor of Psychology who was speaking at the conference had recently returned to competitive higher league chess and found himself up against a 13 year old boy. The 13 year old beat him quite convincingly but still came in the lower quartile of the higher league, so the Professor enquired of him as to why he didn't enter the lower age league where he would have had a good chance of winning. The boy replied that he may well have won in the lower age group, but the most important thing for him was about what he learned from each match, and therefore playing against stronger players was far better for his learning and understanding of chess than winning in a lower league. This 13 year old has a fantastic attitude to learning, a real 'growth mindset' and one which I hope all Reigate St Mary's pupils will embrace.

You will have seen that throughout the year competition has remained intact and I have definitely seen children grow in confidence. There is far more of a 'can do' attitude and the principle of "I can't do it yet" as opposed to "I can't do it" is a theme that now runs throughout the school.

More importantly I am excited to be able to report that my colleagues have all said that this new approach to the children's learning has resulted in more positive attitudes, a lot more willingness to take on challenges and crucially, less fear of failure as children recognise that we learn from our mistakes and build on our 'failures' to improve in whatever area of learning we are experiencing at the time.

First
Attempt
In
Learning } Is more than an acrostic at Reigate St Mary's.