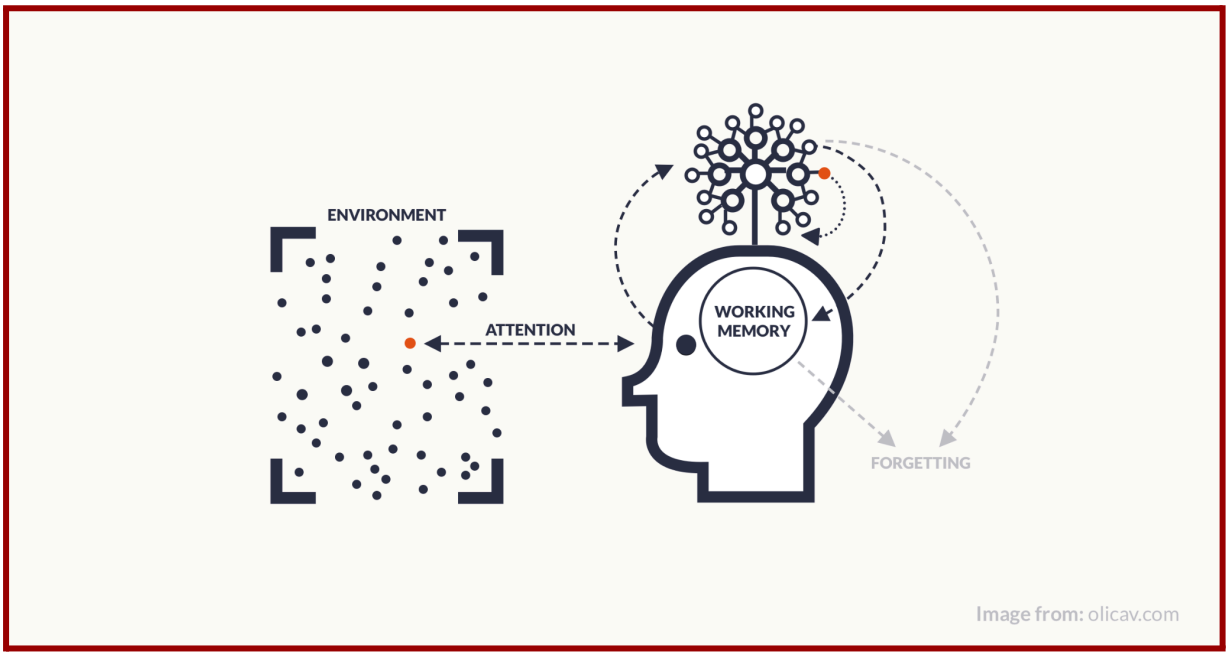
The Playbook

Southville Primary School



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1. Manage Behavior Proactively
2. Cultivate Teacher Credibility
3. Leverage (Collective) Teacher Efficacy
4. Foster a Growth Mindset
5. Reduce Cognitive Load
6. Question for Attention, Rehearsal & Understanding
7. Cold Call Strategically
8. Use Mini-Whiteboards Daily
9. Implement No-Opt-Out Strategies
10. Structure Collaborative Talk
11. Teach for Mastery & Long-Term Learning (Prioritise)
12. Build Robust Schema (Connect)
13. Design Learning in Logical, Cumulative Steps (Sequence)
14. Make Targeted Adaptations
15. Utilize "I Do, We Do, You Do"
16. Model Explicitly & Practice Deliberately
17. Build Vocabulary Systematically
18. Check for Understanding At Each Step
19. Close Gaps with Responsive Feedback
20. Use Retrieval, Spacing and Interleaving Practice

Introduction

The Playbook sets out 20 high-leverage, research-informed teaching techniques that focus on how to teach, not what to teach. Each technique is broken down into its essential "active ingredients", offering clear, practical guidance that can be applied and adapted across different classroom contexts. Rooted in research, best practice, and the science of learning, it is designed to make effective teaching visible, repeatable, and purposeful.

At its heart, the Playbook codifies practice to increase collective impact—not to reduce professional autonomy. It is not a checklist for judgement, but a shared tool for development, collaboration, and coaching. The techniques represent "best bets", grounded in evidence and experience, designed to inform, guide and demystify teaching practice rather than prescribe a single way of teaching. They are intended to be understood, tried, refined, and thoughtfully adapted according to context and professional judgement—without losing the core principles that make them effective.

Evidence-Informed Instruction

The Playbook draws on complementary evidence-informed frameworks, including Willingham's Simple Model of Memory, Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, and the EEF's Principles of Inclusive Teaching. Together, these inform an approach that combines clear, explicit instruction with purposeful practice, frequent checks for understanding, and responsive support—enabling all pupils to access ambitious learning, while maintaining high expectations and reducing barriers to success.

Cognitive Science Foundations

The Playbook is underpinned by key insights from cognitive science: working memory is limited, attention is fragile, and learning depends on what is stored and successfully retrieved from long-term memory. As such, it emphasises breaking learning into manageable steps, securing attention through strong routines, and strengthening memory through retrieval, spacing, and interleaving.

Manage Cognitive Load for Teachers

By codifying effective routines and techniques, the Playbook helps manage cognitive load for teachers, creating reliable habits that can be drawn upon in the moment. This frees up mental capacity to focus on what matters most: responding to pupils and adapting teaching in real time.

Supporting CPD and Coaching

The Playbook acts as a shared language for CPD and instructional coaching. It supports precise, non-judgemental conversations about practice, grounded in a common framework and focused on improvement. It serves as the "Third Point of Reference"—an objective anchor for discussion where coach and teacher focus on the teaching strategy or technique rather than the individual. This makes feedback clearer, less personal, and more actionable, strengthening collaboration and collective efficacy across the school.

Deliberate, Purposeful Teaching

Effective teaching is not about applying strategies mechanically. It is about making deliberate, informed choices: selecting the right approach, at the right time, for the right reason. The Playbook supports that decision-making, helping teachers combine, sequence, and adapt approaches to have the greatest possible impact on pupils' learning.

How Is the Playbook Sequenced?

- **Behaviour & Relationships: Create a Positive Learning Culture**
- **Sustained Attention & Participation: Engage Every Learner**
- **Planning for Success: Prioritise, Connect and Sequence Learning**
- **Explicit Instruction: Teach with Clarity and Precision**
- **Check & Respond: Assess, Feedback, Reinforce**

The Rationale

The playbook is deliberately sequenced to reflect how effective teaching works in practice. It is not a collection of isolated strategies, but a coherent, cumulative approach where each element builds on the last. It moves from establishing strong foundations, through careful curriculum design, to precise classroom instruction and responsive adaptation. This sequence mirrors the reality of the classroom: learning is far more likely to succeed when the right conditions—routines, relationships, and expectations—are firmly in place first.

Rather than ranking strategies by importance, the playbook is sequenced so that each element builds on what comes before it. Foundational practices—such as managing behaviour proactively, fostering a growth mindset, and establishing teacher credibility—create a positive learning culture where pupils feel safe, motivated, and ready to learn. From there, strategies that harness attention and ensure a high ratio of participation increase the likelihood that all pupils are thinking and engaged throughout every stage of every lesson.

Once these conditions are secure teachers can fully leverage high-quality curriculum thinking: prioritising key knowledge, building schema, and sequencing learning in logical, cumulative steps. This then enables precise, explicit instruction—where modelling, guided practice, and deliberate practice are most effective when introducing and securing understanding of new content. Finally, ongoing checks for understanding, responsive feedback, and evidence-informed approaches like retrieval, interleaving and spacing ensure that learning is not only achieved in the moment, but retained over time.

This sequencing also reflects well-established insights into the persistent challenges of teaching, as identified by Mary Kennedy—portraying the curriculum, enlisting student participation, exposing student thinking, containing student behaviour, and accommodating personal needs. Each strand of the playbook deliberately addresses these challenges in turn, ensuring teachers are equipped not just with strategies, but with a structured approach to solving the core problems of the classroom. In parallel, it aligns with the key pillars of a successful classroom (Wilks, Brophy, Marzano): managerial, relational, and instructional. By securing routines and relationships first, then focusing on high-quality instruction, the playbook ensures that all three pillars are consistently and coherently enacted.

Ultimately, this approach is anchored in a set of core questions that define excellent practice across the school: *Is learning disruption-free? Is every pupil paying attention and participating? Is teaching focused on the most important knowledge? Do teachers explain and model with clarity? Do teachers check, adapt and respond to pupils' understanding? And does learning stick over time?* The playbook helps to provide a clear, sequenced route to achieving this consistently across every classroom.

Behaviour & Relationships: Create a Positive Learning Culture

1. Manage Behavior Proactively

- Use and practice consistent, structured routines to manage time and resources efficiently, minimise disruption and create a calm and purposeful classroom.
- Set, teach and consistently uphold firm, visible boundaries with shared expectations, fair consequences and meaningful rewards.
- Use stock phrases, nonverbal cues (proximity & strategic pauses), and positive framing (*Show me you're ready* vs. *Stop talking*) to redirect behavior calmly.
- Use positive reinforcement and specific praise to highlight, repeat and normalise successful behaviour, building trust and a respectful culture.

2. Cultivate Teacher Credibility

- Be calm, consistent, fair, and understanding — children trust and respect teachers who take control, follow through, and don't let things slide.
- Connect with children, listen actively, be approachable and show you care: build up 'relational credit' for when you need to redirect or challenge.
- Bring your authentic personality—your superpower—so children see you as real and reliable. Own what you bring (and be clear what you don't).
- Remember: it's not about being friends — it's about trust and belief in potential.

3. Leverage (Collective) Teacher Efficacy

- Believe in your shared power to positively impact outcomes for *every* student, especially the most vulnerable.
- This belief shapes your expectations, your language, your feedback, and your persistence.
- Teacher Efficacy → Pupil Efficacy → Real Progress

4. Foster a Growth Mindset

- Praise effort, progress, and perseverance rather than innate ability & 'scores': "You're improving because you practiced!" → share success stories.
- Normalize mistakes and struggle as essential to learning, framing them as opportunities to grow: "That's a good mistake—let's learn from it!".
- Actively challenge and shut down any comments or behaviours, such as mocking answers or scores, that discourage risk-taking or "having a go".

Sustained Attention & Participation: Engage Every Learner

5. Manage Cognitive Load

- Present new information in small, manageable chunks using clear explanations to avoid overload and maximise working memory capacity.
- Use dual coding (visuals + words) to support understanding without adding unnecessary detail.
- Provide scaffolds such as worked examples, clear models, and visible success criteria, particularly during initial practice.
- Keep displays and slides clutter-free to minimise distractions and focus attention on the key learning.

6. Question for Attention, Rehearsal & Understanding

- Cycle through questioning phases—checking for attention, rehearsal, and understanding—to scaffold learning and gather reliable feedback.
- Assume children will drift off-task and design lessons to continually re-engage attention.
- Use techniques such as cold calling, asking pupils to repeat answers, mini-whiteboards, and choral responses to ensure 100% participation.

7. Use Mini-Whiteboards Daily

- Conduct quick, whole-class checks for understanding ("1,2,3 Show Me!" or OWL to check boards)
- Spot misconceptions instantly and adapt teaching in real time.
- Use "Show Call" by displaying children's work side by side to compare, evaluate and guide next steps – encouraging children to discuss their thinking.
- Use MWBs as a low-stakes way for all children to actively rehearse and retrieve ideas.

8. Cold Call Strategically

- No hands up!
- Question – Wait – Name: Target children (preferably multiple) *after* teaching or recapping to check for understanding and address misconceptions.
- Use this strategy consistently to ensure *everyone* is always alert, thinking and maintaining active processing.
- Adapt for anxious or less confident learners by providing adequate 'wait time', rehearsal opportunities, or paired practice before answering ('Warm Call')

9. Implement No Opt Out Strategies

- Design low stakes activities where every child must respond: "1,2,3, show me!" with MWB, multiple choice, voting, or ranking activities.
- Use distractor options that reflect common misconceptions to prompt deeper thinking.
- Provide sentence stems to support explanations and encourage all children to articulate their reasoning clearly.

10. Structure Collaborative Talk

- Build a classroom culture where talk is valued, inclusive and purposeful through frequent, structured discussion
- Build social skills, language and early literacy through responsive interactions, back-and-forth talk and clear language modelling
- Use Turn and Talk (TTYP) effectively to rehearse thinking and prepare pupils for whole-class contribution.
- Provide consistent sentence stems (e.g. “I agree because…”) and key vocab (“Explain…using the word…”) to scaffold high-quality academic talk
- Plan and assign roles where appropriate to ensure every voice is heard.

Planning for Success: Prioritise, Connect and Sequence Learning

11. Teach for Mastery & Long-Term Learning (Prioritise)

- Identify and focus on the most important, high-leverage concepts, knowledge, and vocabulary that underpin future learning.
- Prioritise depth and long-term retention over pace or short-term performance – "overlearn" key knowledge until it is fluent, automatic and transferable.
- When planning each unit, be specific and deliberate about exactly what you want all children to learn – make "All Knowing, All" the goal.
- Aim for a high success threshold (80%+) *before* moving on.
- Plan lots of deliberate practice to demonstrate understanding at each stage of the learning and rigorously reteach until knowledge is secure - "keep up not catch up"

12. Build Robust Schema (Connect)

- Understand what came before and what comes next so you know where the learning fits within the progression and how it connects.
- Connect new learning to prior knowledge—help children see ideas as linked, not isolated, both visually and through teacher talk and discussion:
  "How does today's lesson fit into the bigger picture?" "What's the same? What's different?" "What do we already know that links to this?"
- Revisit, connect, apply: every subject, lesson, and term → this is how to strengthen schema and long-term retention.

13. Design Learning in Logical, Cumulative, Small Steps (Sequence)

- Sequence learning deliberately so each step builds securely on prior knowledge, building confidence and ensuring secure understanding without gaps.
- Break complex ideas into small, manageable chunks across lessons, units, and terms to reduce cognitive load and improve clarity.
- Identify and anticipate likely misconceptions in advance and teach them explicitly at each stage to prevent persistent errors and deepen understanding.

14. Make Targeted Adaptations

- High-impact universal instruction creates the foundation for accessible design and targeted adaptations
- Adapt tasks by adjusting pace (more time), volume (less content), complexity (simpler steps), or format (different input/output).
- Use universal scaffolds—such as word banks, step-by-step guides, colourful semantics, and manipulatives—to promote early success and build confidence, gradually fading support as independence grows.
- Pre-teach key concepts and vocabulary whenever possible to reduce cognitive load and set children up for success.

Explicit Instruction: Teach with Clarity and Precision

15. Utilize "I Do, We Do, You Do"

- Systematically model, guide, and release responsibility to children through scaffolded practice ("fading").
- Apply dynamically — cycle between each phase based on assessment for learning and pupils' levels of understanding.
- Narrate your own thinking throughout ("teacher talk") to model metacognition - help children understand *how* to think, not just *what* to do.

16. Model Explicitly and Practice Deliberately

- Demonstrate each step, making the method, knowledge, skills, and thinking processes visible and explicit.
- Use multiple examples, WAGOLLs, and think-alouds to make clear what 'correct', effective, and high-quality work looks like (and what it doesn't).
- Provide SLOP (shed loads of practice) after each learning chunk, starting with tasks that closely match the model and building in difficulty, in order to build confidence, early success and fluency ("intelligent practice")
- Once secure, introduce variation to deepen cognitive challenge and foster greater independence in application.

17. Build Vocabulary Systematically

- Explicitly teach Tier 2 (cross-curricular) and Tier 3 (subject-specific) words: Select → Explain → Explore → Consolidate.
- Use "My Turn, Your Turn" / "I Say, You Say" repetition and give context-rich examples.
- Revisit words regularly through deliberate practice in guided discussion using sentence stems and explicit retrieval tasks.

Check & Respond: Assess, Feedback, Reinforce

18. Check for Understanding At Each Step

- **"**Chunk and Pause": Plan deliberate learning stops – *Has <u>everyone</u> understood this, and how do I know? Have they met the threshold for moving on?*
- Use marking stations, OWLing, whiteboards and Cold Calling to check for understanding - plan for misconceptions in advance with slides and examples.
- Adopt a "gap-finding" mindset — actively seek out who is struggling *and* take responsibility by adapting teaching to address errors and improve learning.
- Build up the difficulty of tasks progressively ("intelligent practice"), checking pupils have met the threshold at each point before moving on.

19. Feed-Up, Feedback, Feed-Forward

- Use AFL strategies and OWL (Observe, Wait, Listen) to notice and address misconceptions in real time.
- Provide specific, actionable verbal feedback focused on the most common areas for development, clearly linked to focused success criteria and models.
- Prompt immediate red-pen edits to correct, edit and improve work, encouraging children to build ownership of their learning.
- Revisit corrected errors in future tasks and lessons to consolidate learning, strengthen long-term retention, and prevent repeated mistakes.

20. Use Retrieval, Spacing and Interleaving Practice

- Retrieval: Start lessons with quick recalls of previous content (e.g., No-opt-out "Do-Now" tasks with discussion) to strengthen memory and expose gaps.
- Interleaving: Mix old and new content regularly (e.g., review last term's learning alongside today's / 'Daily 10') to deepen understanding.
- Spacing: Schedule planned "flashbacks" across lessons, weeks, and terms to embed learning in long-term memory.
- To make it stick: Rehearse new content → Drill with high-frequency early practice → Workout through spaced, interleaved retrieval.

Bonus: Professional Growth: Invest in Your Practice

21. Reflect, Adapt, Improve

- **Be Reflective**
  Learn from your own practice. Know your strengths and areas for development, and use them to inform your next steps.
  Be critically aware of your own biases — reflect honestly on your assumptions and habits, especially when evaluating what is or isn't working for all children.
- **Take Professional Responsibility**
  When something isn't working, take ownership for identifying and fixing it.
  Focus your energy on solutions, rather than placing blame.
- **Embrace a Growth Mindset**
  View challenge and change as opportunities to improve.
  Stay open to feedback, coaching, and new ideas — and notice any signs of emotional resistance.
  Discomfort, awkwardness or unfamiliarity are often signs of growth. When they arise, pause, reflect, and remain open-minded.
- **Refine, Don't Reinvent**
  Teaching is a craft to be honed, not perfected.
  It's okay — and necessary — to use shared approaches, routines and language. Get comfortable with alignment and codification, as these form the basis of equitable learning. Adapt with intention, not impulse.
- **Give It Time**
  Meaningful change doesn't happen overnight.
  Tweaking a strategy, shifting a habit, or implementing something new often takes effort, repetition and persistence.
  Think of it as an investment that will impact both you and the children.
- **Make Intentional, Sustainable Choices**
  Teaching is complex — focus on *controlling the controllables*.
  Use and refine strategies that are high-impact, reliable and sustainable. Be mindful of cognitive load (for you and for children), prioritising what matters most and making decisions that are manageable and sustainable over time.