

The importance of independent practice - Secondary

By Joanna Macaulay

The ability of pupils to apply their learning in a new context is the benchmark that something has been learnt. According to Hattie “learning is the process of developing sufficient surface knowledge to then move to a deeper understanding such that one can appropriately transfer this learning to new tasks and situations”. Independent practice is used to develop this deeper understanding.

In order to prepare your pupils for independent practice and to help them achieve meaningful success, you should provide clear explanations and models to develop the pupils understanding of necessary foundational knowledge and skills.

When pupils are engaging in independent practice, you should be the ‘thermostat’ in the room. You should provide assessment opportunities to identify when to turn the temperature up and increase the challenge given to pupils, and when to turn the temperature down and provide additional support or re-teach material to help pupils master challenging content.

Independent practice is the long-term goal for all teachers because it is the point in the teaching cycle where teachers can accurately assess if pupils “have got it”.