



Kentish Town Church of England Primary School

Excellent teaching, excellent effort, excellent progress: Every child, every lesson, every day

Sycamore Growth Mindset Project Outcome Spring 2017

Project/Intervention

To try to alter chn's perception of 'mistakes' ie: to begin to appreciate that we all make them; that they help us to learn; that we should not be sad / upset / embarrassed by them but see them as an opportunity for discussion and wider learning.

Issues and Challenges

September 2016 questionnaire showed that **over 35%** of Sycamore felt 'extremely bad' when they made a mistake – saying they felt either ashamed/ embarrassed /sad / stupid / upset [see quotes on next page]. The 35% spanned all ability groups from SEN to high achieving. **10%** thought it was 'never' helpful to make mistakes and could not think of any examples of mistakes that had moved on their own, or their peers', learning.

Desired Outcomes

To develop a more positive whole class ethos which recognises the benefit of mistakes to our wider learning.

What we did

- Regularly highlighted and discussed 'good' or 'helpful' mistakes across all curriculum areas, but especially maths as this was clearly the main source of 'upset' when errors were made.
- Invited chn (after prior adult modelling) to come to the IWB and explain their 'good mistake' and what learning we could take from it.
- Regularly included 'mistakes' and how we learn from them in our weekly Circle Times.
- Posted details of 'Mistake of the week' on the wall – explaining what the mistake was and how we could learn from it.
- JN frequently referred to helpful mistakes in feedback marking (esp in maths) and orally.
- JN frequently referred to the positive benefits of a growth mindset (esp in relation to prior mistakes/difficulties) in feedback marking and orally.
- Chn completed a further questionnaire in March 2017 to see if attitudes towards mistakes had changed.
- Chn created mistake related slogans to display around Sycamore to remind each other of the power of good mistakes and the importance of a growth mindset.

How we did

- Many chn welcomed this initiative from the outset – including some of the 35% who had self identified as finding mistakes very upsetting/ embarrassing/shameful. Approx 10 chn seemed very unsure / wary about it.
- Following clear adult modelling, chn became much more willing – and able – to articulate how they felt about their mistakes; how to correct them [or how to help peers correct their errors] and what we could all learn from that process.
- Vast majority of chn became more willing to offer answers / strategies /opinions in all subject areas but especially maths, science and during discussions about class novels.
- Many chn began to refer, without adult prompting, to the importance of having a growth mindset and/or of persevering - both verbally and, in particular, in their 'Dear Julie' self assessment notes written at the end of maths lessons.
- Most chn became more willing to discuss recent mistakes [both their own and – after adult modelling - those of peers] during Circle Time.
- Chn's views – as demonstrated in the March 2017 questionnaire – have changed dramatically since September [see quotes on next page]. In particular, of the 35% [11 chn] who initially said they felt ashamed / embarrassed / sad / stupid / upset when they made a mistake, **only one** of those chn still feels that way. The other 10 chn all circled the option 'I don't mind' when asked how they now feel when they make a mistake. This reflects how most chn now behave in class.
- This project has been particularly beneficial to Alice [ARB] who was very preoccupied / upset by the thought of making mistakes in September 2017. She very regularly refers to the benefits of a growth mindset, both verbally and in her books: "*we all make mistakes and that's ok. They help us to learn. It's important to have a growth mindset*".
- Chn came up with some excellent slogans that they would like to display around class to remind each other of the power of having a growth mindset in relation to mistakes, such as:

*Made a mistake? Keep calm and carry on [Kyrah]
You're doing great – keep going! [Alice – ARB]
Oops – just try again [Frankie – ARB]
If you persevere, things start to clear! [Moya]
Mistakes are marvellous! [Tom]
Never give up [Ryan]
Can't do it yet? So try again! [Holly]
Just accept it and correct it! [Sadie]*

What we learnt

- It's good to talk! Chn clearly appreciated the opportunity to explore their changing feelings around making mistakes.
- Chn appear to find the ethos of 'I can't do it ... yet' very liberating and have a much better understanding now of the fact that they learn in different ways and at different speeds to each other.
- We can learn from our own mistakes and from those of our friends. Chn especially like to explain [or listen to friends explain] the mistakes that they made and what they learned from them.
- This ethos can also be helpful in relation to behavioural 'mistakes' - see quote below.

Next Steps

- Make posters of the slogans that the chn have recently created.
- Create a dedicated 'growth mindset/good mistakes' board for slogans and related work.
- Reinvigorate our 'mistake of the week' initiative as we haven't referred to this much since Christmas 2016.
- Continue to highlight/discuss/praise the learning potential of mistakes.
- Continue to develop the growth mindset of all chn across all curriculum areas.



Article 12. You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.



Some of our pupils said in SEPTEMBER 2016:-

When I make a mistake **I feel:**

"stupid because other people might not have made mistakes"
"that I have been stupid. It makes me so embarrassed"
"that everyone else knows the answer except me"
"like I don't know how to do things"
"embarrassed and scared"
"like I don't know anything at all but everyone else does"
"like I did the wrong thing and that I'm left out because everyone else knows what to do"
"shy and upset and worried that I might make the same mistake over and over and over"
"that people might point at me and laugh and stare"
"like I've got butterflies in my tummy"
"sad inside – especially if I've said the mistake out loud"
"lonely because I think I'm the only one who doesn't get it"
"determined to get it right next time"

Some of our pupils say now, in MARCH 2017:-

When I make a mistake **"I don't mind"** [97% circled this option]

Other freely volunteered comments on questionnaires *[with no prior adult modelling or discussion]*

"If I make a mistake now I just cross it out and carry on – I never give up!"
"Mistakes help me in my learning"
"Mistakes are not the end of the world – often they're very helpful"
"I know I can learn from them and improve my work"
"Mistakes make me do better next time"
"My mistakes can help other children check their work too"
"Mistakes help me realise what I still need to learn"
"When I misbehaved I just copied someone that was good in class and [this helped]"
"If I make a mistake I just think – that didn't work so I'll try again"
"Mistakes make learning a better place"
"They help me remember not to do that thing again"
"When I make mistakes in my football skills it makes me try even harder until I succeed".
"It's important to never give up and keep persevering"
"When Julie gives me feedback marking it helps me know how to put things right and I try not to make that mistake again"
"We all make mistakes once in a while"
"I used to write in different tenses but we've talked about that mistake and I don't do it now. I think other people learned from that too".
"My mistakes have taught me to read things more carefully"
"I know we're all at a different stage of our learning and if someone gets something wrong that's ok – just keep calm and carry on"
"Mistakes just make me want to do better next time to show that I can be the best that I can be!"
"Just accept it and correct it"