

A Parents' Guide to Cooperative Learning



At Stalham Infant & Junior Schools we have our own specific approach to learning – this is called Cooperative Learning. This guide will explain some of the features of Cooperative Learning, its benefits and what it can and can't do.

What was wrong with teaching in the past?

First of all the efforts and “style” of teaching in the past were not wrong – we are just living in a different world. For many of us the changes in technology and how it has changed the way we live and work has been immense. How many of us when we were at school thought that our jobs would involve sending messages at the speed of light to all corners of the globe from our phones? How many of us were aware that this world we were living in was shrinking so that now a small business in Stalham can trade with the USA, Sweden, Canada and Australia – offering skills and creativity as much as products? This is the world that our children are growing up in and they need the skills to thrive in this new environment.

What is Cooperative Learning?

Cooperative Learning is an approach to teaching. Knowledge and skills are modelled by the teacher and then learners are able to practise these skills in a series of structured activities. These structured activities are called CLIPS. CLIP means **C**ooperative **L**earning **I**nteractive **P**attern. Each CLIP is designed to encourage certain elements of listening, speaking, questioning and response. The teacher will use the CLIP they feel best supports the learning of the groups of learners in their class. Cooperative learning is very interactive with pupils moving around the class. Speaking to each other and answering questions.

What are the CLIPS?

CLIPS are content free – this means they can be used in any subject. At Present there are around 8 CLIPS that are used in classes to help learning these are:

- Catch one Partner
- 3 for Tea
- Simultaneous Write Round
- Role Rotate Reading
- Word Round
- Boss and Secretary
- Meet in the Middle
- Think-Pair- Share

Catch 1 Partner is where each child has a question on a card. They approach a partner and say “Excuse me, can I ask you a question please?” The other child answers them. They

repeat and then swap cards. Usually this activity is used as a starter to remind children where by the teacher models something or refers back to something taught before. However, like all the CLIPS, they can be used at any time and in any situation.

Word Rounds, Think pair share, 3 for Tea and Meet in the Middles allow children to express and question each other in a timed situation so that they can explain how they solved a problem or answered a question.

Simultaneous Write Rounds encourage children to write in a supported way – reading each other’s work and adding to examples before – it means that children feel confident about writing and that they can “think of something to write”.

Boss and Secretary (also known as Sage & Scribe) allows for procedures to be practised in any subject. After teacher modelling one child is “The Boss” and explains, without writing, how to solve a problem to the other child (Secretary) who writes down everything they say in the procedure. The secretary can ask questions to check but it is not always necessary. They then swap.

Role Rotate Reading is a method of children accessing the same text when they are at a similar ability to develop their comprehension skills.

What does a cooperative Learning Classroom look like?

As far as possible your children will work in groups of 4. Sometimes an adult may make up the fourth person if there is an odd number. These groups can be in ability groups or mixed ability depending on how the teacher wishes to differentiate. These groups are not set in stone and children will find themselves working alongside a variety of people in their class. This encourages and installs respect and positive Behaviours for learning.

Will my child still work independently?

Yes, they will. A “typical” lesson may look like this:

Teacher Models then uses a CLIP to practise. Then the teacher will Model the next step or focus of the lesson followed by another CLIP. After that the children will show what they know independently. This work is then marked in the book and tracked as evidence to show your child’s progress.

Cooperative Learning gives confidence, practise and support to a child before they start their own independent work.

So how does Cooperative Learning Help?

Cooperative Learning is a way of ensuring that children develop communication skills and an acknowledgment that working together is an effective way of building skills vital for work and

thought in the future. Also it helps to build confidence before independent work is undertaken. Cooperative Learning also encourages deeper thinking and critical thinking skills as the follow up questions we usually ask are *how?* and *why?*

Is Cooperative Learning being used in any other schools?

Many schools have parts of cooperative learning as part of their teaching. A report from the Sutton Trust noted that Cooperative Learning was very effective at improving pupils' progress. However, schools in England do not use it as much, yet in Scandinavian countries Cooperative Learning is much more widely used.

How can I help?

You can help in the same way as you do usually; reading regularly with your child, listening and talking and encouraging your child to explain their answers. You may even wish to ask which CLIPS your child has been using that day in class.

Can all ages of children access Cooperative Learning?

Children in Reception all the way up to those young adults in further education can use Cooperative Learning to support their learning. The CLIPs that are used will be done so based upon the age and the stage of the children within each class. For example Reception age children can easily take part in a Catch 1 Partner when reviewing the sounds they have been learning. Where as Year 6 children might use a Simultaneous Write Round when developing their longer independent pieces of writing.

Is this a “magic wand” to solve all the problems?

No it is not a magic wand. Learning still requires children to work hard, listen and concentrate on tasks. However, cooperative learning can help to boost engagement, understanding, teamwork and attainment.

What do I do if I have further questions about this?

Talk to your child's class-teacher.