

# AN EEF SCHOOL CASE STUDY: DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

Walton High School

## School context:



Walton High School is a comprehensive secondary school for 11-18 year-olds in Staffordshire. It has approximately 1,370 pupils on role, including 270 sixth-form students. Approximately 10% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

## 1 What problem were you looking to solve?

On average, pupils at our school adapted well to our remote provision during 'lockdown'. However, we were aware that online learning was likely to have been less effective than face-to-face lessons for some pupils who had engaged less than others. We wanted to make effective use of diagnostic assessment to gain a more accurate picture of the learning that had taken place during partial school closures and from the information provided, identify topics in need of revisiting and any misconceptions to address.

The EEF's [Diagnostic Assessment: Evidence Insights tool](#) states that retrieval practice activities can be effective in diagnosing gaps in learning and, helping to identify future areas of focus.

## 2 What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?

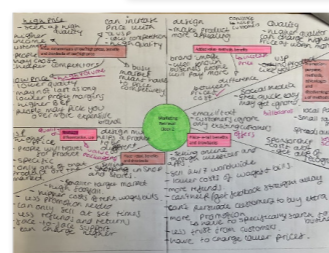
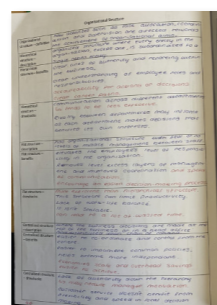
We anticipated that a key challenge would be ensuring that teachers used retrieval practice to diagnose future learning needs as well as identifying where learning needed to be recapped. To overcome this, we provided training on diagnostic assessment and how it could be used effectively. We then allowed time for teachers to decide how diagnostic assessments could best be integrated in their teaching and what format this would be most suitable in their classrooms.

We were also conscious that lesson time would be needed to reteach concepts pupils struggled with, as identified by the assessments.

## 3 What did you do?

We designed activities which required pupils to retrieve knowledge taught during lockdown, or topics that pupils had found most difficult prior to the pandemic. These included low-stakes quizzes, concept map outlines, tables, or free-recall activities (see images below).

We assigned lesson time and homework tasks in which pupils could complete these activities and used the outcomes to identify topics to reteach. This included addressing misconceptions as they became evident in lessons and making time for a series of 'pause' lessons, in which we stopped teaching new content and retaught topics that pupils had particularly struggled with. We also planned future retrieval practice on these curriculum areas.



## 4 How do you monitor/evaluate that the intervention is working?

We are seeking regular feedback through discussions with pupils, teachers and middle leaders. Pupils have been enthusiastic about this approach so far, many have reported feeling more confident in their knowledge of these topics.

We are using learning walks to monitor whether diagnostic assessments are being used across the school effectively, if they are being used in the way intended and if they are seen as useful. We will also continue to monitor whether they have an impact on pupil learning through analysing learning outcomes.

## Additional:

### Suggested reading:

- *The EEF Guide to Supporting School Planning – A Tiered Approach to 2021*  
[eef.li/school-planning/](https://eef.li/school-planning/)



## Reflection questions

- What is the best form that diagnostic assessments could take in your school/subject/phase?
- How will you use the results of the assessments? How will you address gaps in learning or misconceptions?
- How will you monitor the impact of your use of diagnostic assessments?