

Introducing Cognito: A curriculum for the future

14.11.2022 - Industry is experiencing a chronic skills shortage and the Institute of Directors estimates it is already costing UK business somewhere in the region of £6.3 billion. Meanwhile critical-thinking, problem-solving and creativity have topped a list of skills The World Economic Forum says employers will be looking for over the next five years and beyond.

It's a rapidly-changing world and one where those young people who can do what algorithms and artificial intelligence can't will thrive. At EHS, educating the 'whole child' has long been our mantra. Nurturing every aspect of a young person from their academic progress to their social and emotional development is what we are known for and this term we're adding another string to our bow with the introduction of ***Cognito Lessons***.

The name Cognito is reflective of the nature of the project. Creativity is ranked as the highest order of thinking and enriches our understanding so that we are equipped for the jobs of tomorrow. ***Cognito Lessons*** have been designed to nurture problem-solving, creativity and critical-thinking skills, sitting alongside our existing academic, pastoral and co-curricular offering with the aim of giving each girl vital, transferable life and work skills that will prepare her for life beyond school.

Since September, girls in Years 7 and 8 have been receiving a weekly 35-minute ***Cognito Lesson*** dedicated to future-proofing their skill set. Building confidence, self-belief, tolerance, resilience and leadership skills, girls are challenged to work independently and collaboratively to develop creative and innovative approaches to solving real-world problems. The lessons use fun, active approaches to learning and concentrate on topics that are meaningful and inspirational to them personally to make sure they get the most out of the sessions.

More specifically, the focus is on developing five key characteristics inherent in creative thinking processes. As well as cultivating an **open-minded** approach, the exercises and tasks will require girls to hone their **analytical, problem-solving, organisation and communication** skills. Underpinning each part of the curriculum, girls will be asked to reflect regularly on their progress and assess their performance in relation to these five core characteristics.

To consolidate their learning even further, we'll also be implementing a much broader range of assessment methods including podcasting, viva voce discussions with subject teachers, film-making and project management reviews. All exercises that require girls to assimilate and make use of a number of new and highly transferable skills. The academic year will culminate with the Cognito Conference where each girl will present a short, unscripted talk to their class with no visual aids, justifying their decision-making processes and reflecting upon their learning journey.

We recognise of course that these skills do not exist in isolation, so students will be given opportunities to use their new skills in other areas of school life. From form times with tutors to academic lessons and across our co-curricular offering, the characteristics pupils learn through **Cognito Lessons** will be embedded into broader lessons and activities throughout the school day.

Director of Teaching and Learning at EHS, Amit Rajp, said: “As automation, artificial intelligence and algorithms replace many of the routine functions that people fulfil, to earn a living, the young people who will thrive in the future will be the ones who can do what machines can’t: reason, reflect, come up with new ideas and develop new creative solutions.

“As educators we’ve been hearing for a while about the chronic skills shortage in industry, but **Cognito Lessons** represent the first time we’ve carved out a dedicated space in the weekly timetable to explicitly work on honing these kinds of skills and competencies - all capabilities that will be highly transferable whatever career path our pupils choose to take.”

Clare Macro, Headteacher at EHS, said:

“With **Cognito Lessons** we’ve started sowing the seeds of a curriculum for the future, placing equal value on the social and emotional development of each child alongside the acquisition of knowledge and their intellectual growth.

“Theorists and philosophers have long debated the purpose of education. But whichever side of the fence you come down on, it’s impossible to ignore the vital interplay between personal, social, emotional and intellectual development in preparing young people for life and work in the 21st century”.