

# FARSLEY FARFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Growth Mindset



I can learn anything I want to.  
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.  
I want to challenge myself.  
When I fail, I learn.  
Tell me I try hard.  
If you succeed, I'm inspired.  
My effort and attitude determine everything.



I'm either good at it, or I'm not.  
When I'm frustrated, I give up.  
I don't like to be challenged.  
When I fail, I'm no good.  
Tell me I'm smart.  
If you succeed, I feel threatened.  
My abilities determine everything.

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## **FIXED OR GROWTH MINDSET?**

At Farfield, we have been encouraging pupils to develop a Growth Mindset.

Growth Mindset is not a new curriculum but simply an approach to learning in school and life beyond. Research by Developmental Psychologist Dr Carol Dweck of Stanford University points to people having one of two mindsets: Growth and Fixed. A child's belief about intelligence is an important factor in whether they become an effective learner. We all hold beliefs about concepts such as 'intelligence', 'ability' and 'personality', with roughly half of us holding a **'fixed'** mindset and the other half a **'growth'** mindset.

***"In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that, and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never look dumb. In a growth mindset students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can be Einstein, but they believe everyone can get smarter if they work at it." Carol Dweck***





Although most people will undoubtedly have a mixture of these mindsets in different aspects of their life, Dweck's research highlights very important evidence that most teaching professionals would instantly recognise in their class. From a practical point of view, staff would

recognise pupils with a fixed mindset who are scared to contribute to class discussion for fear of looking stupid; who take one bad test result or a sign that they cannot do the subject, are going to fail and therefore give up; who will not try anything new for fear of getting it wrong; who will persevere with the same approach to their learning even when it is not working rather than being creative and finding a different solution. Developing a Growth Mindset is designed to remove such barriers to learning as the pupils realise they can grow their ability rather than being told they can.

As you can imagine, a key part of developing such a mindset is in hearing a consistent message from everyone involved. Receiving the Growth Mindset message at home as well as school will inevitably help to further embed the message with your child.

Our work has focussed on 5 main areas: Brainology, Challenge, Feedback, Learning from Mistakes and the power of the word 'YET'. You can learn more about the work we have done so far and a great deal more besides by visiting the dedicated Farfield Growth Mindset blog: <http://ffgrowthmindset.primaryblogger.co.uk/>

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
<p>Beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability are <b>fixed</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nature</b> determines intelligence and ability.</li> <li>• I have an innate ability for some things and an innate disability for other things.</li> <li>• I will always be good at, for example, maths and always be poor at, for example, art.</li> </ul>	<p>Beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability can <b>grow</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nurture</b> determines intelligence and ability.</li> <li>• If I apply myself more, seek help, take risks, change my strategy, then I've got a good chance of learning anything and thus growing my intelligence and talent.</li> </ul>
<p>Priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prove</b> myself.</li> <li>• To succeed, especially with little effort, as this proves that I am clever and / or able.</li> <li>• Avoid failure of any sort, as this proves I have low ability levels.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve</b> myself.</li> <li>• To learn through challenge, as this will help me to grow my talents.</li> <li>• Seek interesting challenges that will stretch and help me to learn.</li> </ul>
<p>Attitude to Challenging Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge should be avoided.</li> <li>• Difficulties will mean I am not as clever as I thought.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means I'm stupid</b> or incapable.</li> </ul>	<p>Attitude to Challenging Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge will help me learn.</li> <li>• Difficulties are an inevitable part of the learning process.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means I need to adapt</b> my strategies.</li> </ul>
<p>I apply myself when there is . . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>show off</b> my strengths.</li> <li>• A good chance of getting everything right.</li> <li>• Very little risk of failure.</li> </ul>	<p>I apply myself when there is . . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>learn new</b> insights or skills.</li> <li>• Enough challenge to stretch me.</li> <li>• An opportunity to try something new.</li> </ul>
<p>Response to challenge or failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blame myself or, to protect my ego, someone else.</li> <li>• <b>Feel inferior</b> or incapable.</li> <li>• Trying guessing the answers or copy others.</li> <li>• Seek ego-boosting distractions.</li> </ul>	<p>Response to challenge or failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no blame – I just want to know how to do it better next time.</li> <li>• <b>Feel inspired</b> to have a go.</li> <li>• Try various problem-solving strategies.</li> <li>• Seek advice, support or new strategies.</li> </ul>
<p>Mottos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either you're good at something or you're not.</li> <li>• If you're really good at something, you shouldn't need to try.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must be stupid.</b></li> <li>• Don't try too hard; that way you've got an excuse if things go wrong.</li> <li>• No pain, no pain!</li> </ul>	<p>Mottos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success comes with application.</li> <li>• No matter how good you are at something, you can always improve.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must be learning.</b></li> <li>• Always try hard; that way you've more chance of more success.</li> <li>• No pain, no gain!</li> </ul>

## How praise can help to develop a Growth Mindset

As a staff, we aim to praise children's effort, process and commitment rather than talent or intelligence. Phrases and approaches that staff at Farfield aim to use are:

- *"You really worked well to prepare for that assessment and your improvement shows it."*
- *"I like the way you tried different strategies until you finally got it. You thought of different ways until you got it to work"*
- *"I like way you took on that project. It took a lot of work doing research, thinking about layout before carrying it out. Boy, you're going to learn a lot of things from this which you can use again in the future."*
- *I know you used to find school work easy and worry that bits are difficult now. But, the truth is you weren't using your brain to its full power. I'm really excited that you're stretching yourself now and working to learn hard things."*
- *"That homework was really difficult and long. I admire the way you went about finishing it"*
- *"That work is really good. Tell me about it and how you did it"*
- *"How did you feel when you completed that difficult piece of work?"*
- *"I like the effort you put into that piece of work, but let's work together some more and see if we can figure out what you didn't understand."*
- *"We all have different learning curves. It may take more time for you to catch up this and be comfortable with this material but if you keep working hard at it, you will."*
- *"Everyone learns in different ways. Let's keep trying to find the way that works for you."*

Staff try to avoid praise like, "Wow you did that so quickly" or "Look, you didn't make any mistakes!" This can send the message that speed and perfection are what is prized most. However, speed and perfection can be the enemy of difficult learning. Youngsters can think, "If you believe I'm smart when I'm fast and perfect, I'd better not take on anything challenging" when in fact some of the best learning comes from learning from mistakes and the process of how to develop from there.

**Praise which encourages a growth mindset**

It really shows when you work hard at your writing/football/painting.

The effort you put in makes us so proud.

You tried so hard – I can see that.

That was a struggle for you and you kept going – well done.

Let's look at those mistakes – they're a real chance to learn.

You did that so easily – maybe it wasn't enough of a challenge.

You can't swim yet, but if you keep trying, you'll get there.

Your commitment and practice have paid off.

I found maths tricky at school but I needed to keep going and learning from my mistakes.

**Praise which encourages a fixed mindset**

You're a great writer/footballer/artist.

We are so proud that you got X marks.

I'm not sure it was worth all that effort.

That took you ages.

What a shame you only got 15/20.

You did that so easily – what a bright spark you are.

You're not a natural swimmer.

You're really talented.

Don't worry I was never good at maths at school.



## Phrases staff will be trying to avoid

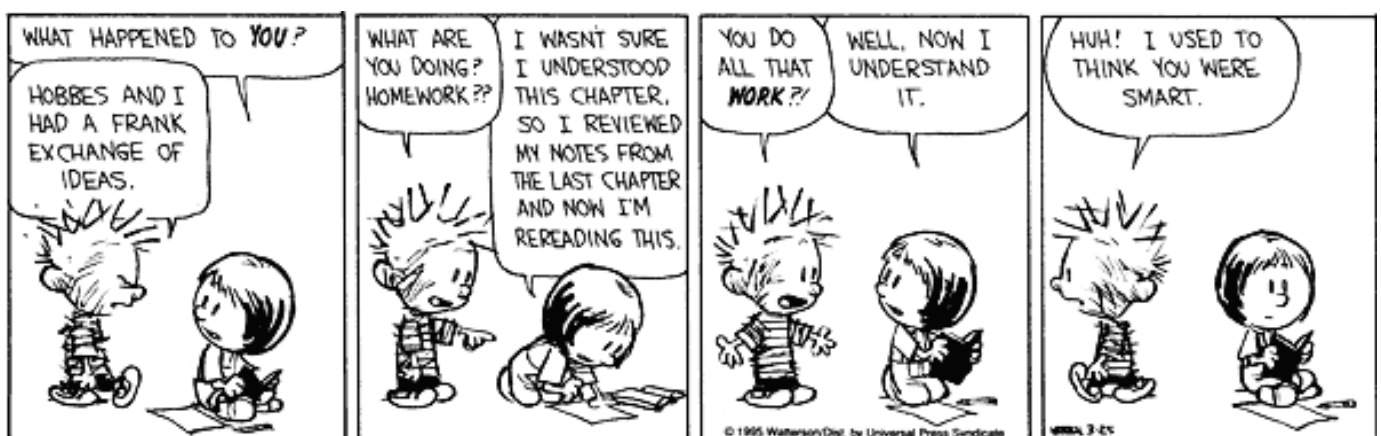
Children love praise. They especially love praise about their intelligence and talent. It really gives them a boost and a special feeling... but often only for a short time. The minute they hit a snag, their confidence can be destroyed and motivation hits rock bottom. If success means they are smart, then failure can mean they are stupid.

Pupils often worry about failure in school and feel doing poorly in one piece of work means they simply cannot and will never be able to do something. The message to them is that they may not be able to do it **YET**.

So does this mean staff will not praise their pupils? Not at all! It just means that we need to try and stay away from certain kinds of praise that only focuses on intelligence and talent rather than effort.

For more information, try our Growth Mindsets blog:

<http://ffgrowthmindset.primaryblogger.co.uk/>



## Five Quick things you can do to help develop a growth mindset in your child:

1. **Ask open-ended questions to solve a problem or achieve a goal.** “What do you think will happen if...” or “Why do you suppose...” These questions build logical thinking skills and often lead to rich discovery.
2. **Use specific feedback that identifies what the child accomplished.** We all use phrases like “you’re brilliant”, “you made that look so easy”, “you’re so clever” but praise like this doesn’t tell your child what they have done well – these comments just reinforce a fixed mindset in your child. Instead, praise what they have done specifically – “you sounded that word out really carefully and used your phonics – well done”, “I like how you kept going at swimming and tried to get all the way to the other side”.
3. **Encourage kids to take a risk.** Watch and listen to your child so you can take cues about what else they are ready to tackle. Vygotsky calls this the “zone of proximal development” – when we gently nudge children to use what they know to try something just a bit out of their reach, but yet developmentally appropriate. By offering small but achievable challenges, confidence and persistence emerge .
4. **Be persistent and growth-orientated yourself.** Narrate your thoughts as you try something new or frustrating (with a U rating, of course!). Your child may even be able to offer some helpful tips. This allows children to see we all have to work hard to solve problems and we all continue to learn new things. Try to avoid labelling yourself in a fixed mindset way – telling your child “oh I’m rubbish at maths” gives them the message that you are either good at maths or not good at maths and there is nothing you can do about it. A more growth mindset comment would be “oh I found maths tricky at school but if you keep trying and learning from your mistakes, you’ll get there.”
5. **Don’t sweat the small stuff.** Accidents, and mistakes happen. Show your child that there’s something to be learned when we don’t achieve what we set out to accomplish. Maybe someone else lends a hand. Maybe you return to the task at another time. Maybe it’s best to abandon things for a while or break things down into smaller steps. Be specific about what worked, identify the emotions involved, and offer encouragement for the next time. At Farfield, we actually celebrate classic errors as ‘Marvellous Mistakes’ from which we can learn.