



CHAPTER TEN

Checklists: Ensuring achievement

D – When thinking about achievement, ensure you:

- Define the exact student outcome you want to achieve before taking action.
- Describe the specific change you expect to see in lessons, books or assessments.
- Decide how you will know whether the change has happened.
- Consider what needs to stop in order to create capacity for improvement.
- Write the intended impact in a clear sentence before launching initiatives.
- Focus on the student change rather than the activity being introduced.
- Identify the smallest changes that will produce the greatest impact.
- Prioritise high-leverage actions over marginal gains.
- Ensure staff understand the desired outcome before discussing strategies.
- Review actions regularly against their intended impact.

T – When responding to data:

- Define the precise impact you want the data to help achieve.
- Use data to identify patterns, trends and areas for improvement.
- Resist acting immediately before fully diagnosing the issue.
- Identify where the issue sits: curriculum, teaching, knowledge or independent practice.
- Gather additional evidence where required before deciding on actions.
- Select a small number of high-leverage actions linked directly to the identified need.
- Agree specific actions and responsibilities with the team.
- Prioritise actions that strengthen existing practice rather than constantly introducing new initiatives.
- Organise impact priorities into a clear sequence and focus on one at a time.
- Monitor whether the intended impact is occurring before moving to the next priority.
- Celebrate improvements and embed successful actions into team habits.

T – When carrying out achievement conversations:

- Complete your own data analysis before meeting with staff.
- Schedule short, focused meetings after key assessment points.
- Ask teachers to bring scripts from students who are not yet reaching their potential.
- Focus on progress students rather than students with significant attendance or behaviour barriers.
- Review student work and assessment evidence together.
- Identify the specific barrier preventing further progress.
- Explore what has already been tried in lessons.
- Agree a small number of practical next steps and classroom adjustments.
- Prioritise actions that can be implemented immediately.
- Record agreed actions and review their impact at the next assessment point.



Five Steps Ahead

- Use successful strategies to inform wider department practice.

Y – When leading during exam season:

- Maintain a calm, visible and organised presence throughout exam season.
- Protect staff workload and remove distractions wherever possible.
- Keep the focus on students and outcomes rather than panic or pressure.
- Tighten curriculum structures and provide high-leverage revision resources.
- Hold regular exam-class meetings to review priorities and barriers.
- Monitor intervention, revision and parental communication closely.
- Celebrate progress and remind staff of previous successes.
- Set a positive and optimistic tone before every exam.
- Focus pre-exam sessions on confidence, familiarity and secure knowledge.
- Support staff and students through periods of stress and fatigue.
- Address tensions or concerns quickly before they escalate.
- Remain steady in your decision-making and model confidence throughout.

Y – When responding to exam results data:

- Arrive early and check in with exam-class teachers before students arrive.
- Review results briefly before discussing them with the team.
- Share key outcomes with staff openly and promptly.
- Celebrate student successes, improvements and department achievements first.
- Identify any unexpected outcomes that require further investigation.
- Check grade boundaries and key grade thresholds before advising students.
- Gather information on students who may require reviews of marking.
- Avoid making promises about grade changes or review outcomes.
- Maintain a positive, calm and professional tone throughout the day.
- Ensure students understand their next steps and available options.
- Agree escalation routes and processes with senior leaders before conversations begin.
- Make notes of issues to investigate later and avoid rushing into conclusions.
- Protect staff morale and absorb disappointment where necessary.
- Keep the focus on students and people before data.

Y – When analysing results-day data:

- Allow time for reflection before making major decisions.
- Focus on future improvements rather than assigning blame.
- Identify broad patterns and trends across the department.
- Compare outcomes against the intended impact of previous actions.
- Consider contextual factors that may have influenced results.
- Review outcomes alongside curriculum, teaching and assessment decisions.
- Look for strengths that should be retained as well as areas for improvement.
- Prioritise a small number of key lessons rather than creating a lengthy action list.
- Use findings to inform future department priorities and planning.
- Keep analysis focused on improving outcomes for future cohorts.
- Avoid becoming consumed by individual results or isolated cases.
- Turn analysis into clear actions that can influence future student achievement.



Five Steps Ahead

Y – When creating achievement targets:

- Complete your results analysis before setting new targets.
- Identify the most significant improvement areas from whole-cohort outcomes.
- Focus on patterns that cannot be explained solely by context.
- Agree a small number of long-term achievement priorities.
- Link targets directly to the strategies and actions needed to achieve them.
- Discuss targets with your line manager and ensure they are evidence-informed.
- Prepare examples of success stories that celebrate staff impact.
- Share department strengths and improvements before discussing areas for development.
- Communicate targets clearly and explain why they have been chosen.
- Translate targets into actions and routines that will be implemented across the year.
- Be realistic about school context and staff expertise when setting expectations.
- Avoid overwhelming staff with excessive data or too many priorities.

D – When developing long-term achievement strategies:

- Treat achievement as a Year 7-11 journey rather than a Year 11 intervention.
- Build curriculum sequences that progressively develop exam knowledge and skills.
- Use assessment points to identify and address emerging patterns early.
- Embed retrieval practice and strong learning routines from the start of KS3.
- Develop student independence and revision habits over time.
- Address misconceptions as early as possible before they become entrenched.
- Ensure key knowledge is taught, revisited and secured before it is assessed.
- Use KS4 outcomes to inform improvements to KS3 curriculum design.
- Make achievement-focused decisions across every year group, not just exam classes.
- Thread achievement strategies through curriculum, teaching, assessment and intervention.
- Prioritise early action over late intervention wherever possible.
- Review systems regularly to ensure they are strengthening future outcomes.