

Castle Douglas High School



Marginal Gains for Attainment

Small improvements. Repeated consistently. Powerful collective impact.

Inspired by the marginal-gains approach associated with British Cycling: rather than searching for one dramatic intervention, we improve the small behaviours that influence learning every day. Individually they may seem minor. Together they can change outcomes.

Teachers - improve the learning experience every day by

Marginal gains - What it looks like.

Start promptly. Learning begins immediately and lesson time is protected.

Use retrieval. Build in short recall of previous learning to strengthen long-term memory.

Check understanding. Use questioning, mini-whiteboards and other checks rather than assuming pupils understand.

Make everyone participate. Reduce passive learning and ensure all pupils are thinking.

Teach key vocabulary. Explicitly teach and revisit the language pupils need to succeed.

Give actionable feedback. Make clear what needs to improve and how.

Require a response to feedback. Pupils correct, redraft or improve rather than simply receiving a mark.

Model excellent work. Regularly show pupils what a strong answer or performance looks like.

Spot gaps early. Correct small misunderstandings before they become larger barriers.

Know the pupils on the margins. Identify pupils who can move to the next level, grade or qualification.

Intervene early. Provide support before prelims or final assessments expose a long-standing problem.

Maintain high expectations. Challenge incomplete, rushed or low-quality work consistently.

Teach exam technique routinely. Practise the skills of assessment throughout the course, not just near exams.

Contact home early. Share success and concerns while there is still plenty of time to act.

Finish deliberately. Use the end of lessons to consolidate and check what has been learned.