

OUTSTANDING LESSONS Pocketbook



A pocketful of
sparkling practice
for teaching
brilliant lessons in
which both you and your
students can shine

Caroline Bentley-Davies

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Pocketbook



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Foreword

Teaching outstanding lessons is an aspiration that all teachers share. We all want to know what to do to make our lessons highly successful because when we teach great lessons we have better motivated, engaged and interested students. These are young people who will not only fulfil their potential in examinations and wider life skills, but who will enjoy and remember what they have been taught.

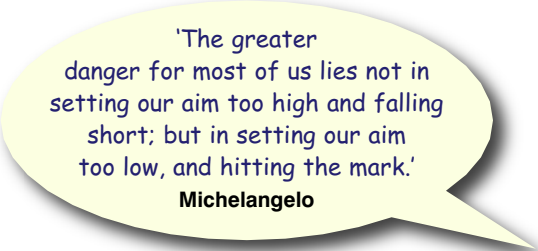
In the UK, Ofsted no longer grades individual lessons. Judgements are made, however, about the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in a school, and of course the evidence for this comes from lesson observations. Many teachers clamour to know effective strategies and techniques to ensure their lessons are the best they possibly can be. They know being a great teacher isn't about pulling the occasional 'perfect' lesson out of the bag for an observation or inspection; it is about developing excellent relationships with pupils and honing our skills and judgements about them on a daily basis. This is what enables us to teach great lessons consistently – rather than feeling they are huge theatrical productions that can only be arranged and ordered well in advance with plenty of effort and props!

Foreword

Even the best teachers have lessons that don't quite hit the mark. However, they don't let the occasional setback or failure deter them. Excellent teachers know how important it is to set themselves high expectations, even if they occasionally fall short in delivery.

They learn by trying things out and reflecting on what was successful and what was less so. Great lessons are built from adapting and improving on an aspect of a lesson that did not go quite as well as planned.

Pupils appreciate the efforts of a teacher who sets high standards. The attitude you adopt towards your own teaching practice will be picked up on consciously and subconsciously by the pupils you teach. Raising your game will help them to raise theirs.



'The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and hitting the mark.'

Michelangelo

Foreword

The tips in this Pocketbook will enable you to develop the skills to teach a stunning lesson, one that will knock the socks off your observer, but the book has a much broader remit. In looking at developing outstanding lessons, it considers crucial factors drawn from current classroom practice, educational research, and pupil feedback.

As you read, bear in mind that the success of any lesson will be determined by how you respond and tailor your teaching to your class's changing reactions. How are they finding the lesson? How are they tackling the work? What does their feedback tell you?

This book isn't a simple checklist of everything that makes a 'perfect' lesson. Teaching isn't that straightforward and thank goodness for that! What you *will* find are the key things to consider when planning and teaching your lessons and a range of practical classroom strategies and suggestions. Think about them, sift and select, trial them, and most importantly **adapt** them to meet *your* pupils' needs.

So, are you ready to give it a go?



**Myth vs
Reality**



**Developing
Great
Relationships**



**Planning
Outstanding
Lessons**



**It's About
Them – Not
You!**



The X Factor



**Resources
and
Techniques**



**Motivate
'em!**



**Moving
Forward**



Myth vs Reality

Misconceptions



The key factor in determining whether a lesson is outstanding is how well the pupils are learning and whether they are making excellent progress. What does the teacher do to engage, motivate and challenge their students? What impact does the lesson have on them?

Some teachers feel that there are lots of seemingly impossible ingredients required to teach an outstanding lesson. Common misconceptions include:

- Always having to write up lesson objectives at the start of the lesson
- Always reviewing the learning at the end of the lesson
- Always having to use ICT
- Ensuring that peer and self-assessment are part of each and every lesson
- Using teaching techniques that relate to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners in every lesson
- Having perfectly behaved pupils, or pupils working in silence 100% of the time

In all of these instances the rule is the same: the focus needs to be on **the relevance of the activities and how they contribute towards pupils' learning.**

Some myths



Let's unpick a few myths about the 'perfect lesson'. Doing so, will help us explore some key elements in outstanding lessons:



Myth 1. *'The teacher does all of the work'.*



Reality – It's the pupils who should be working hardest in the lesson – not you! We all know that if somebody just tells us how to do something we rarely remember it. It is by being active in our own learning, whether through discussion, note-making, or trying out ideas, that learning will really 'stick'.



Myth 2. *'Excellent lessons just 'happen''.*



Reality – Outstanding lessons are carefully planned and thoroughly prepared by the teacher. Not planning lessons well enough means that there is a danger of not addressing the students' needs and of the teacher talking too much or letting activities run on too long. All of these can undermine good learning.

Some myths



Myth 3. *'Lesson plans must be rigidly followed'.*



Reality – Good lesson plans are important as they help you think about what you want to achieve and what resources you need to use to match your learners' needs. Without a good plan it is less likely that you will teach an effective lesson. But students are unpredictable; sometimes you realise that you have planned something that is too easy or too difficult. Slavishly following an unsuitable lesson plan is never a good idea. Great teachers get feedback from their class and have the confidence to adapt their lesson accordingly.



Myth 4. *'Outstanding lessons only happen with 'high ability' or perfectly behaved classes'.*



Reality – Provided you create suitable, appropriate challenge, pupils of *all* abilities can achieve in outstanding lessons. Likewise, we are in a position to manage pupil behaviour so that it does not detract from our lessons. (More hints on this later.)

Some myths



Myth 5. *'You can only tell if a lesson is excellent by the end of that lesson'.*



Reality – In outstanding lessons teachers rarely leave reviewing the learning to the last five minutes of class. An excellent teacher periodically reviews how the lesson is going by checking how the pupils are responding and what they are learning.



Myth 6. *'Only a stern disciplinarian can teach an excellent lesson'.*



Reality – Good behaviour and order are essential – but pupils respond better to praise and reward, than iron control. If pupils are silent – how do you know they are learning?



Myth 7. *'You can only teach an excellent lesson after x number of years' teaching'.*



Reality – New teachers and experienced teachers teach excellent lessons. It is the impact of what you do on the pupils' learning that is most important – not the number of years' service.