

Kagan Cooperative Learning is a dynamic approach to teaching based on ensuring active participation in the learning through the range of cooperative learning structures. Teachers use their professional judgement to match the structures to the learning content and simultaneously build the social skills of the children. They compliment and add to the teacher's toolbox of teaching methods and strategies. Over time, the range of structures used and the fluency improve to the point where lessons become multi-structural, where children switch between pair, group and whole class work with in-built support. The structures are cleverly designed to ensure that all children have equal opportunity and responsibility to actively engage in their learning within a safe environment where they can take risks and learn from their peers. Not only do high achievers see a rise in attainment, but the gap between them and the middle and low achievers is narrowed.

The approach itself comes from America, pioneered by Dr Spencer Kagan (a research academic in the field of psychology) and Laurie Kagan (former Director of Elementary Education for the state of Nevada) and developed over the last 30 years. Kagan Cooperative Learning has been adopted by hundreds of thousands of schools across America and the world, and more recently here at Tiverton Academy.

Our first experience of Kagan was around 3 years ago when Elaine Brown of Teacher To Teacher UK Ltd delivered our first day of Cooperative Learning. It was as if a whirlwind had been set off in our school: teachers became energized; classrooms became reconfigured and a buzz settled around the staffroom with teachers sharing their experiences of their first ever structure! It was a time for a fundamental rethinking of our pedagogy and basic classroom practice. As a school, we have not looked back since!

If you want to find out more, here are some links

<http://www.kagan-uk.co.uk/>

<http://www.kaganonline.com/index.php>