Core Strength

The **Reading** and **Writing** **Speaking** and **Listening** Me

Maths and Me

Building the Best Me

The Digital Me

Other people and Me

The 'Finding Out' Me

The Creative Me

An introductory guide for HAF Providers

Achievement for All's Core Strength framework is designed to Birmingham children to think for themselves.

It can work for any age from 5-6 upwards to 16+ and beyond.

It can help children become successful learners at school or college ("**school readiness**")

And it can help children become more successful adults by equipping them with essential work and life skills.

This guide will help you to understand the framework and use it every day to encourage the growth of Core Strength in your children through everyday activities, everything you offer through your HAF provision.
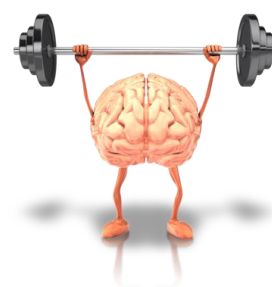
This is a companion guide to a similar one for parents and carers.

Everything can count!

Core Strength

Bring it on Brum!
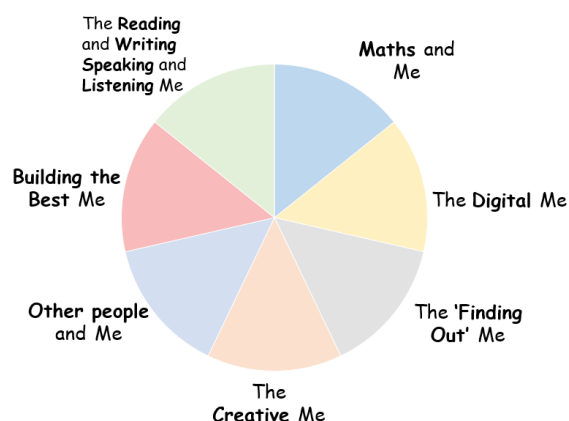
This guide can be printed out. But if viewed as a PDF document on a laptop or smartphone, the links to more articles and resources work automatically.

Contents

Introduction

We all want the best for our children.

We want to give them the best possible start in life; a good education, good qualifications which will improve their prospects of getting a good job one day.

But the world of work has been changing faster than our education system for many years. Without doubt good qualifications are important: but young people need much much more.

In their most recent report on education and learning, the CBI identifies three essential elements that will enable a young person to become "work ready": Character, Knowledge and Skills.

1. **'Character'** – individual traits and strengths that enable someone to flourish at all stages of their lives.

> Character enables young people to deal with set-backs at work, reflect on personal strengths and areas for improvement during performance reviews, and show an inclusive and compassionate outlook on themselves and others.

2. **'Knowledge'** – a rigorous, rich, and stretching curriculum, with each subject or domain studied given high status and an equal emphasis.

> This looks like young people having the essential knowledge needed to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best and most powerful knowledge within subject disciplines and helping them to have an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.

3. '**Skills**' – the application of knowledge and character in real world scenarios through team work, leadership, problem-solving and communication.

> This looks like the application of both character and knowledge, working successfully with colleagues, public speaking and presenting.

All three are essential and connected. Each of them on their own does not prepare a young person for the modern world of work.

Schools concentrate on the knowledge aspect through a well taught curriculum and attempt to grow character and skills through the wider experiences, ethos and example. But are we missing an opportunity?
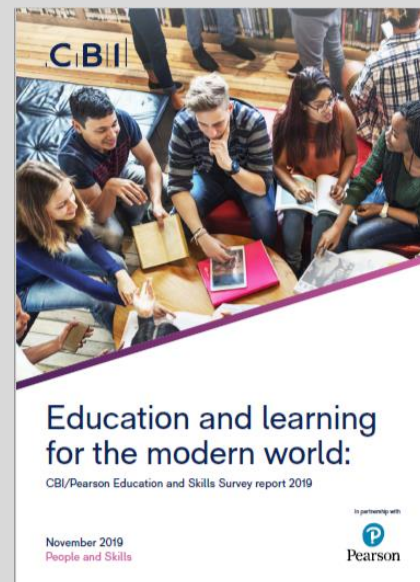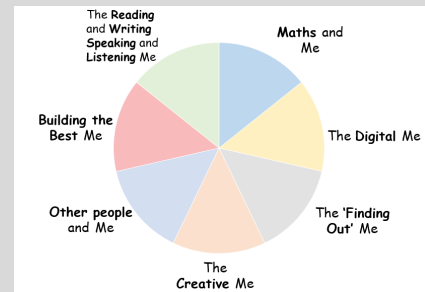
Some children become over-reliant on their excellent teachers, and although they sometimes achieve outstanding results, they struggle to learn and work independently.

Some children lose interest in formal learning and become restless and demotivated as they get older: perhaps their practical or creative abilities and interests cannot be accommodated by the secondary school system?

Some children fall behind because they do not develop a toolkit of mental strategies to help them learn better…and the gap grows wider as they pass through primary into secondary.

Wouldn't it be great if there was a simple framework that helped children and young people identify the tools within them to become better learners, which also built the character and skills that will make them "work ready" when they leave formal education?

Watch this video https://youtu.be/SCGV1tNBoeU

Wouldn't it be great if parents and carers had a simple language and approach at their disposal to identify and encourage these skills beyond the classroom- learning doesn't happen just in school.

Wouldn't it be great if teachers, parents and carers, learners, community sport and leisure providers all used the same language of learning to add purpose and value to every learning experience that is on offer?

**Welcome to the Achievement for All Core Strength framework!**

Our framework:

- Identifies **seven sets of thinking tools** that can be applied to everyday learning and living, from primary school onwards, that eventually lead to the "work readiness" that employers desire
- Uses a **simple language** that children readily understand and associate with, helping them to become strong and independent learners
- Can be **applied within the classroom and beyond**, embracing a child's interests and pastimes whatever they might be, helping them to see the relevance of formal learning and the power of informal and non-formal learning
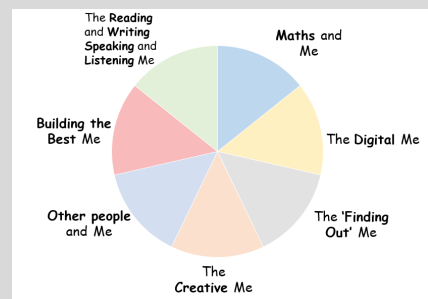
- **Gifts parents and HAF providers a powerful language of learning support** that has relevance and impact whether your sons or daughters' schools use the Core Strength framework or not

The recent experiences of Covid-19 lockdown and the impact it has had on formal schooling highlights more than ever the need for children to be supported in their learning in new and different ways: the Core Strength framework does this!
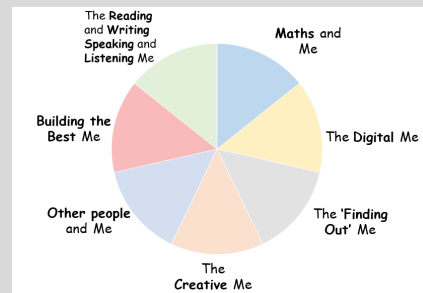
"21st century systems need to prepare students to deal with more rapid change than ever before ... for jobs that have not yet been created ... using technologies that have not yet been invented."

Employers seeing development of young people's employability skills as a priority for secondary schools
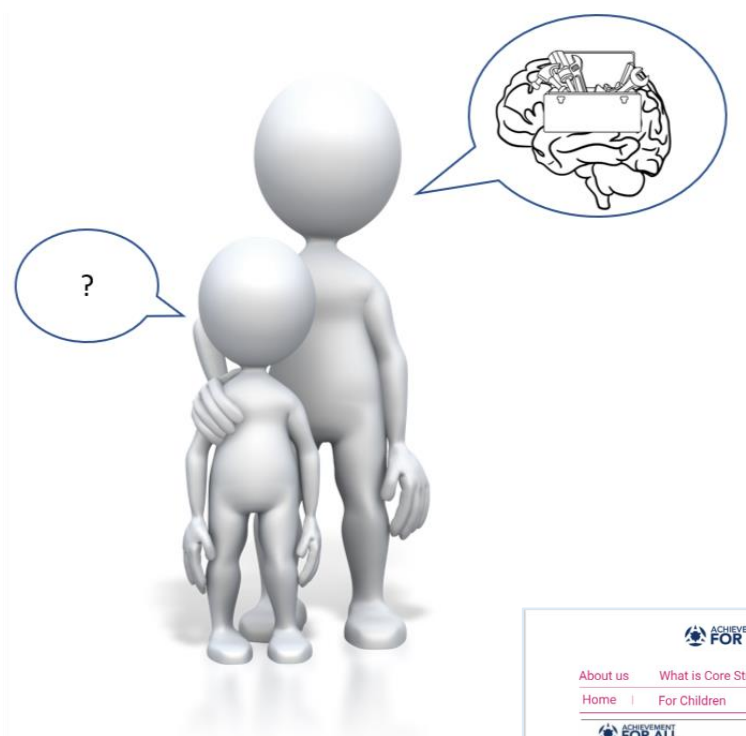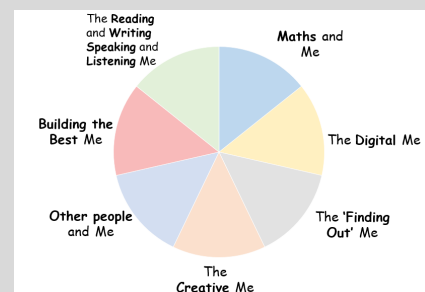
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What is Core Strength?

The more you talk about thinking, the better you get at it.

But sometimes it can be hard to put thinking into words.

Core Strength gives you a shared language of learning that is easily understood and applied, at home, with teachers at school... Anywhere!

It's a bit like imagining a toolkit in the brain… you can talk about how best to use it!

Visit the Core Strength for Children website and watch the video with your child

https://res.afa3as.org.uk/CoreStrength/CS_Children/index.html

The Core Strength toolkit can be used in any situation.

It can bring learning alive whatever a child does.

It can connect learning experiences, giving a young person the confidence and ability to think for themselves!

And this is where the magic happens.

If we give children a way of talking about thinking that can be applied to anything they do, they get better and better at thinking for themselves.

A gift for the rest of their lives!
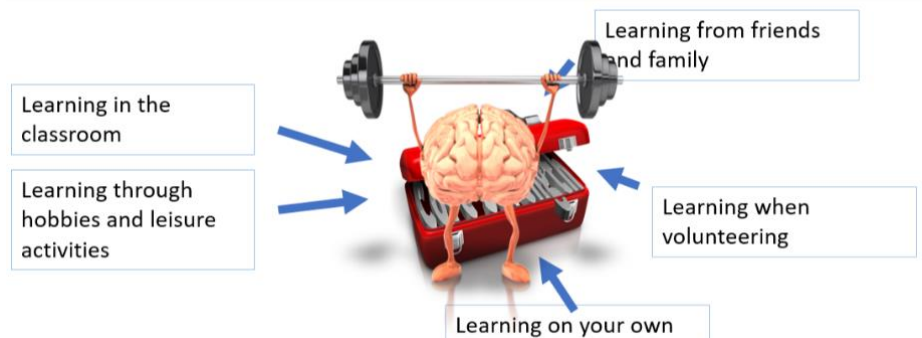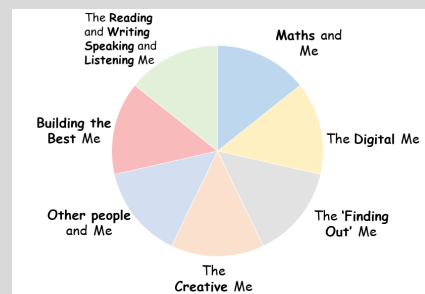
Formal, Nonformal and Informal Learning

Formal Learning
- Tends to be classroom-based
- Tends to follow a "National Curriculum"…
- …To set standards and expectations
- Assessed against standards
- Assessed at regular intervals
- Age-related expectations are progressive, becoming more detailed and challenging as the learner moves through the education system
- Curriculum influenced by government policy (e.g. current emphasis on coding)
- Led and managed by experts with qualifications
- Accredited and reported
- Has "credibility" and is seen to have "value" and "worth"

Nonformal Learning
- Learning is less organised
- Does not necessarily follow a set curriculum
- Shaped by interests and motivation of learner
- "Expert" doesn't necessarily mean "qualified"

Examples *After-school badminton club; Earning a "Camp Cooking Badge" at Scouts Group, or completing Duke of Edinburgh Award through application of technology; Adult evening classes; On-line courses in digital imaging, media, handicraft, etc.*

Informal Learning
- Learning is not organised, but far more experiential and spontaneous
- Often unconscious acquisition of skill and knowledge
- Shaped by interests and motivation of learner
- "Expertise" from wide range of sources
- Often overlooked when planning "formal" learning

Examples *Learning how new tablet or mobile device works; on-line gaming communities; chat-rooms and social media; learning within family; learning from peers*

The seven Core Strength elements

We have created a framework that gives relevance and purpose to learning and thinking.

The importance of **English** and **maths** cannot and should not be ignored. Being literate and numerate should be perceived as basic human rights, and a gateway to future employment and well-being.

But we want to show how literacy and numeracy link into everything we do, touching every aspect of our lives.

If children and young people do not realise this, then English and maths skills remain rooted in the classroom.

Using all **digital technologies**, from computers to tablets to smartphones, is of critical importance in every aspect of 21st century living and working… keeping yourself (and your personal information) safe on-line is also another essential life skill.

The skills of **managing information** and information flow are defining the way we work, think, learn, un-learn and re-learn in the 21st Century. Unlearning? Think about every time you get a new mobile phone!

Just-in-time learning, spotting the "signal" from the "noise", the selection, sharing and creation of information… it's not what you know, it's what you can do with what you know that counts.
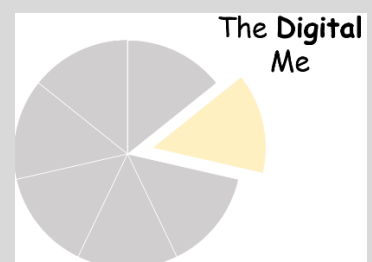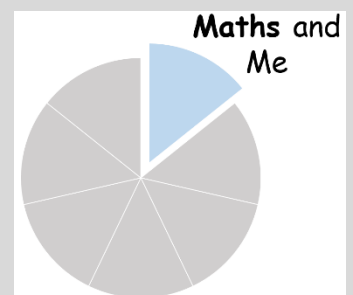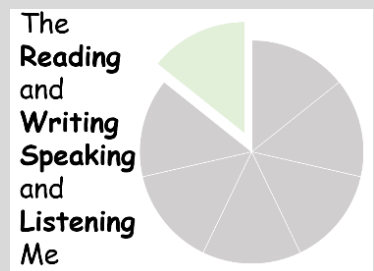
Managing Relationships The 21st Century workplace makes demands beyond "communication" skills, with complex one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many networks, sometimes across time zones and across countries.

Good leadership and good followership are interchangeable.

Another important aspect of relationships is about being aware of other people's emotions: so important for wellbeing and mental health.

Other people and Me

Creativity is emerging as the vital ingredient of business and life success, building on "problem solving" to encompass and support initiative, enterprise, entrepreneurship, spotting and developing opportunity and the creation of new knowledge. It is about harnessing creative energy that is grown through the Arts (Art, Music, Drama) and Design, then applying thinking skills to generating new ideas, solutions and answers.

This is vital from shop floor to boardroom in a rapidly changing world.

And finally…

A positive attitude and **self-management** skills are cited as vital in every employer survey.

The Creative Me

Young people need to be rewarded for developing a positive approach to work, showing grit and resilience when things are tough… as they take more responsibility for their own learning and career management.

Building the best Me

Why "*me*"?

The choice of language has been carefully researched and promoted.

We want children to personally **identify** with the toolkit.

We want them to consciously select and apply the tools, with support. The more they identify and use the tools, the more likely it is that they start to use them *without* thinking it.
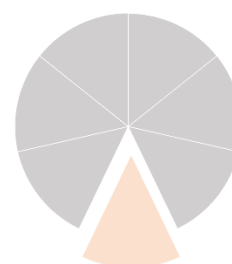
It is just like learning to drive a car! You practice with support until the learning is automatic and becomes part of you!

You will also notice that there is sometimes a degree of overlap between these skillsets. We will explore this later.
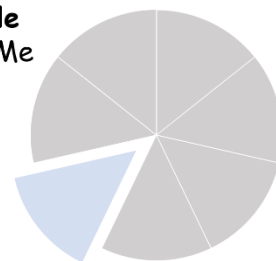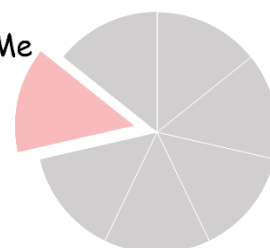

Why *me?*

Bringing the toolkit alive

We have a range of resources that you can download to help monitor and celebrate progress, like this dart board record of progress.

As children complete activities, hitting the target can be celebrated… a really motivating and fulfilling experience for you as well as them!

You can use stars or ticks or stickers or dates.

You and your child can negotiate and agree beforehand what the targets are… or you can "catch" your child who may be using one of the skillsets without realising it.

Make Aware Help children to identify the core strength elements, and the tools they have at their disposal *("Catch" children doing something! Praise them!)*

Practice Give children opportunities to practice, rehearse, discuss, plan and reflect on using these seven toolkits *(Build life skill awareness into activities)*
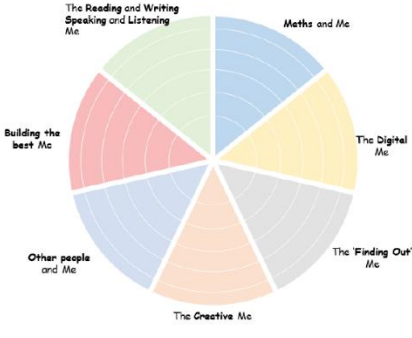
Apply with Support Give children opportunities to apply the skills with support from you (*This is called "scaffolding"*)

Encourage Independent Use *Then take the scaffolding away!*
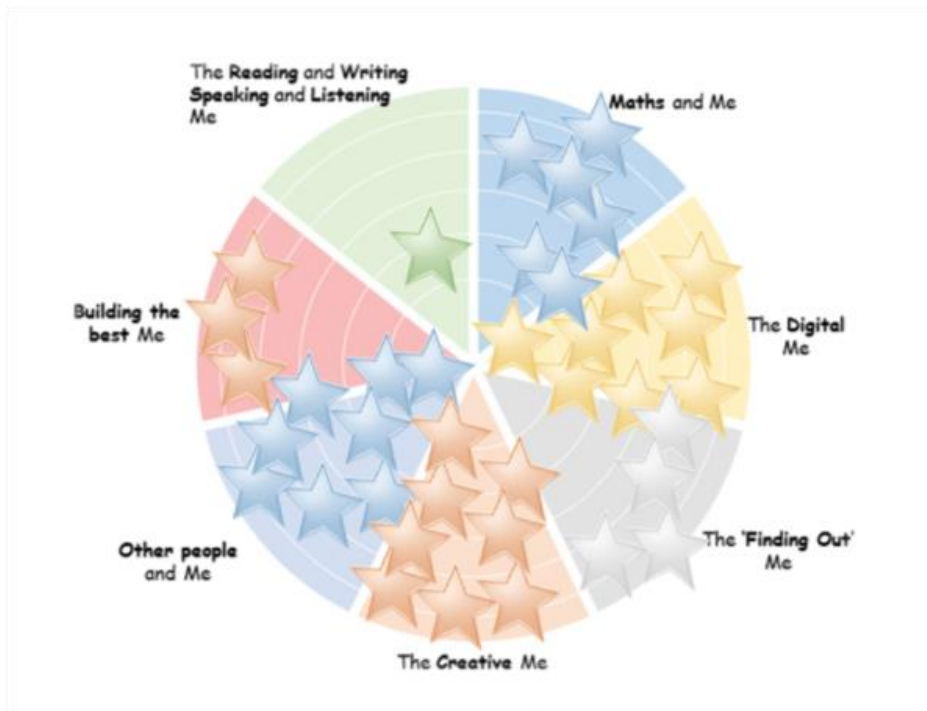
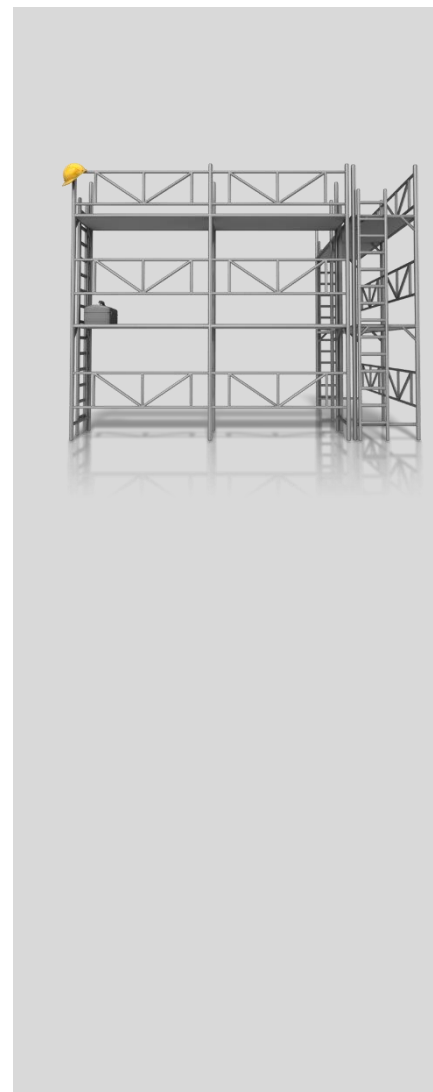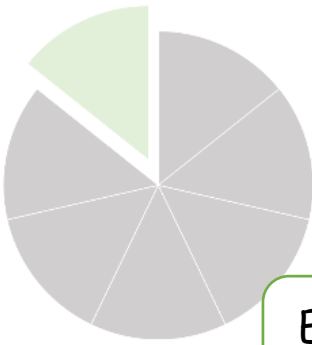Click on the image to download a copy of the Record of Achievement chart
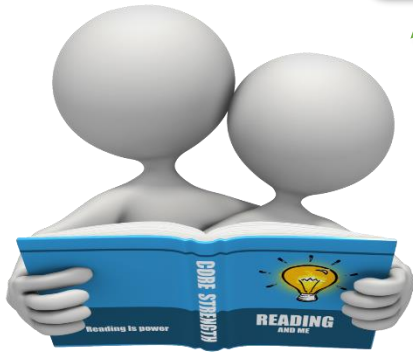
The
Reading
and
Writing
Speaking
and
Listening
Me

> Explain that again to me… slowly…

> Can you give this message to your mother please?

> Nanny would love to receive an email from you telling her what you have been doing…

> Next time you write, how can you make it better?

> Can you spot my spelling mistakes?

What your children can do

Keeping a diary or a blog

Explaining something in their own words (or repeating back verbal instructions to confirm that they have understood what to do

Learning and using new words and phrases

Listening carefully and then passing information on accurately

Knowing when it is OK to use slang and street talk… and when it is not

Developing handwriting and typing skills

Taking confidently to unfamiliar people

Taking confidently in a discussions- putting thoughts into words

Writing is power

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

Maths and Me
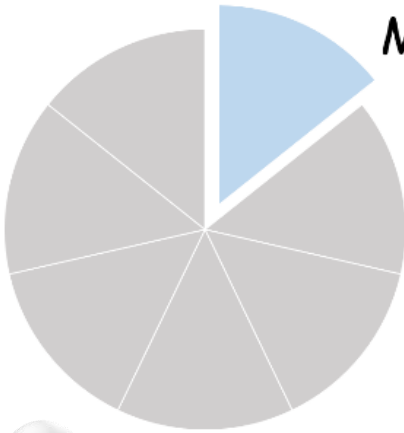
How many…?

How much will we need if…?

What's the quickest way to …?

Can you see a pattern in …?

Can we save any money if…?

What your children can do

Managing money (pocket money… travel costs… a small budget to decorate room etc.)

Mentally totalling up the shopping bill as you are shopping

Working out timings and distances when planning a journey (bus and train timetables)

Using the internet to find the cheapest suppliers for favourite groceries

Clothes shopping- comparing prices

Sharing – counting - predicting

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

The **Digital** Me

Could you search for …?

Can you find out how this app works …?

How do you know that this is a genuine site …?

What do **you** think is safe to say about yourself, online …?

What your children can do

Exploring and using all the functions on their mobiles

Installing new apps (under supervision!) or explaining how apps work to other people

Using video and audio to record achievements

Online gaming (yes it can count… in reasonable doses!)

Being safe and secure online (passwords, hacking, cyber bullying (observing and participating), stranger-danger, etc.)

Using social media platforms appropriately

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use
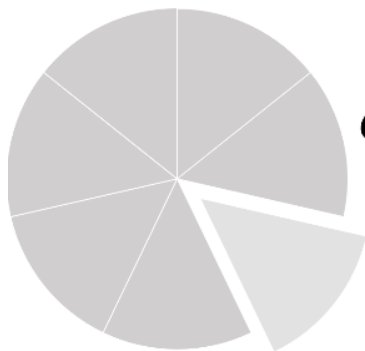
The 'Finding Out' Me

Could you find out about ...?

What your children can do

Using books and libraries to find information then select information relevant to the *purpose* of the search

Explaining to other people what they have found out (a report, a conversation, a presentation)

Interviewing family members or familiar adults (e.g. *What was (x) like when you are a child?"*)
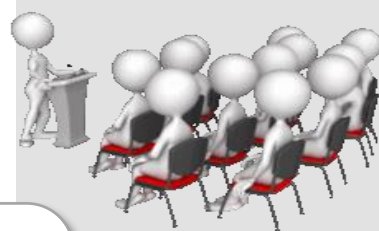
Comparing different sources of information...

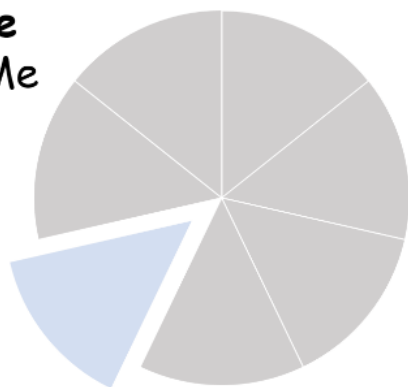Using internet search engines

Spotting "fake news"!

Could you find out which one is best ...?

What does Uncle Albert think ...?

Let's all do some research and then decide where to go on day trips when we get to "X" this summer ...

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

Other people and Me

How can we divide up this task so that we can do it quicker …?

What your children can do

Carrying out their role in a team or group task

Helping others with their role in a team or group task

Leading a team and planning what others need to do

Taking part in a discussion, listening and appreciating what others are saying- letting other know what you are thinking

Respecting others on social media

Being aware of other people's emotions and offering help and support when they need it
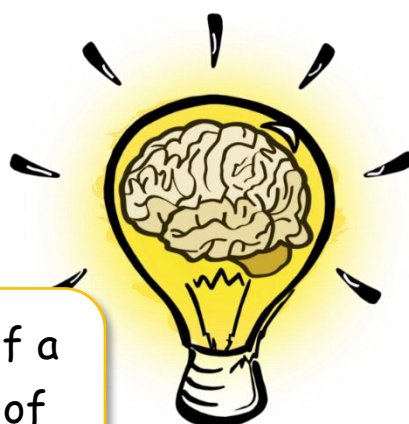
Shameem looks upset… try and find out why and comfort her…

Tell us what to do first …

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

The
Creative
Me

Why did you decide to do it like this?

Can you think of a different way of doing this?

Don't worry at all, things sometimes go wrong… if you were to do it again, how would you do it differently?

What your children can do

Creating a new song, dance or play- talking about different ideas and choices along the way-

Thinking of ways of raising money for a charity, selecting a choice and saying why, then putting the plan into action

Creating artwork, websites and posters for a given purpose, or creating a new piece of artwork and talking about it

Trying to find more than one way of solving a problem or challenge

Trying out variations to a recipe

Thinking up better ways of doing tasks

What else could you do to…?

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

Building the best Me
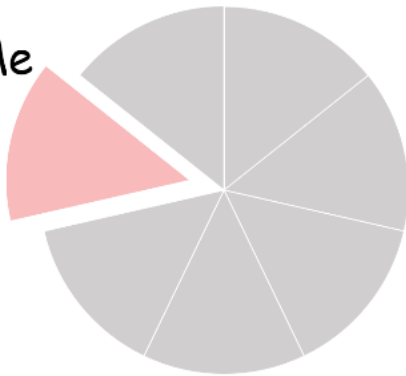
You can't do it? You can't do it **yet**!

Let's plan for next week. Do we need anything special for school / sport / group? Is your sports kit washed?

How did last week go? Can we organise things better this week?

I am **sure** you know where the vacuum cleaner is!!!

Get organised

What your children can do

Planning out the week ahead... setting small goals and targets...

...Keeping a record of achieving some of these targets

Not giving up, showing a bit of grit and determination if things aren't working out

"Better if..." thinking about how to do it better next time...

Doing the washing up when it's your turn, keeping the bedroom tidy, sorting and putting out the recycling... it all counts

Getting up on time, being punctual and attending school or agreed activities regularly

Planning ahead with the right equipment for school or other activities

Make aware – practice – apply with support – encourage independent use

Using more than one tool to complete a challenge

We mentioned on Page 9 that there is some overlap between the seven skillsets.

You seldom use one set of mindful skills when faced with tasks or challenges; they are designed to fit together, which is why they are drawn like slices of a cake!

Here is a great example of how Core Strength tools can combine, with purpose, with a goal, and with a measurable outcome!

Example: Practicing "keep up" skills at home

Practicing regularly for 10 minutes a day to improve your skills

⬇

Searching the internet to find out how to do it better, or asking a friend or coach for help
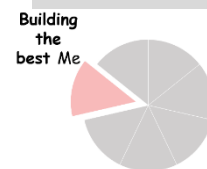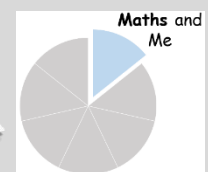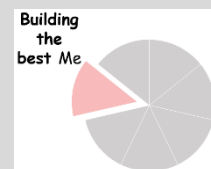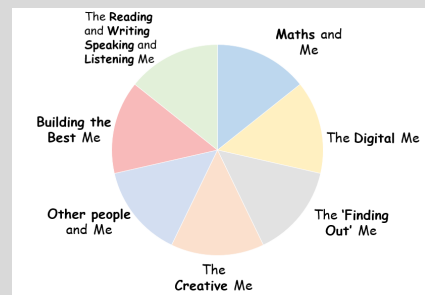
⬇

Keep a record of progress…. Using charts and tables to record personal stats over time

⬇

Even if progress is slow, sticking with it, showing grit and determination to succeed

⬇

And once the skill is mastered, learning to apply learning to a new skill, with your team mates, the art of volleying in a match situation!

Top tips

- **Stop! Think!** Give children lots of time to think. There is nothing wrong with 30 secs of silence.
- **Encourage conversation** Give children a chance to discuss their thinking and ideas with others (either peer-to-peer or with an adult)
- **Try to use open questions** "Why…? How…? Tell me about…What is happening… What will happen if…?"
- **Time to plan… opportunities to reflect** Help children identify opportunities to skill build, and planning to skill build (make thinking *visible*). Always make sure there is time to reflect ("How do you think that went?" "What worked well?" "Better next time if…?")
- **Small steps… achievable challenges** Pick just one or two mindful skill areas to highlight work on and reflect on each day
- **Celebrate success** at every opportunity… build self-esteem, self-confidence (and support resilience and grit-building for sticking at it)
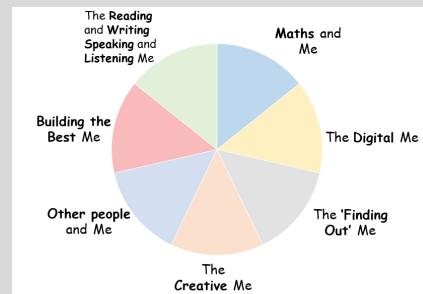
Links to resources

Achievement for All Core Strength website

https://afaeducation.org/news/core-strength/

What is Core Strength? Animated Graphics

https://res.afa3as.org.uk/CoreStrength/AFACoreStrength/index.html
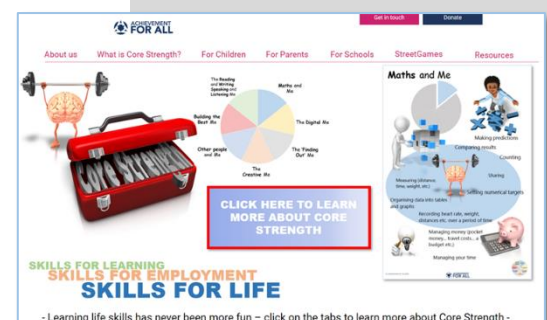

Core Strength for Parents With audio description

https://res.afa3as.org.uk/CoreStrength/CS_Parents/index.html

Core Strength resource hub Free downloadable resources

https://res.afa3as.org.uk/CoreStrength/CS_Resources/index.html

Coming soon…

Core Strength- Guide to Summer Challenges

Core Strength- Stretching the more able

Core Strength- Igniting early learning

How to find us

Achievement For All
23b Kingfisher Court
Hambridge Road
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5SJ

Social
Keep in touch and find out more …