

ST DOMINIC'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

is delighted to host

Making Best Practice, Common Practice: Adaptive Teaching & Metacognition

MONDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2025

9:00am - 3:00 pm

Keynote Speakers:

Nathan Burns (Mr Metacognition)

Kate Jones





Welcome



Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls for our research-informed conference, 'Making Best Practice, Common Practice: Adaptive Teaching and Metacognition'. I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the Department of Education for supporting this event and enabling us to bring together such a wide range of expertise.

At St Dominic's, we believe that professional learning is a lifelong journey—essential at every stage of a teacher's career. Opportunities like today are invaluable, as they allow us to engage with new thinking, deepen our understanding, and most importantly, apply research directly to our classroom practice.

This conference has been designed to be both practical and inspiring. Our keynote speakers and workshop leaders will share evidence-informed approaches that can be translated into tangible strategies for your own teaching. With a particular focus on adaptive teaching and metacognition, every session will connect back to our shared goal: ensuring that all learners thrive through the power of research-informed practice.

I encourage you to take full advantage of today's programme—ask questions, share your insights, and leave with new tools and ideas that will enrich your practice and, ultimately, your students' learning.

Thank you for joining us today. I wish you an enjoyable, stimulating, and rewarding conference experience.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Orla O'Neill".

Orla O'Neill
Principal



Speakers



Nathan Burns, known as Mr Metacognition, is a leading UK expert on metacognition who works with schools and education organisations worldwide to improve classroom practice. A former pastoral leader, More Able coordinator, metacognition lead and Head of Maths, he authored Inspiring Deep Learning and Teaching Hacks on practical applications of metacognition. Now focused on professional development, he delivers training across the UK and with Teach First, Ambition Institute, and the Maths Hubs, regularly presenting research at conferences and online.

Kate Jones is an experienced teacher, leader, bestselling author, blogger and award-winning international speaker. She is currently Senior Associate for Teaching and Learning at Evidence Based Education and the author of over ten books, including a bestselling series on retrieval practice. Kate was also the editor of The ResearchEd Guide to Cognitive Science, and her latest book focused on evidence-informed and workload-friendly feedback strategies to support teacher workload and student progress. Kate writes extensively about education in various educational magazines, including Teach Middle East Magazine and the TES and is also the founder of The Love To Teach Podcast. She has presented and worked with schools around the world. You can connect with Kate on social media @KateJones_Teach.



Speakers



Professor Daniel Muijs is Head of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work and Professor of Education at Queen's University Belfast. He co-edits *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* and is Executive Editor of *Education Sciences*. A former Deputy Director for Research and Evaluation at Ofsted, he led its curriculum research programme. Professor Muijs has held professorial/leadership roles at Universiteit van Applied Sciences and the universities of Southampton, Manchester, and Newcastle, and is currently leading a rewrite of the Flemish national curriculum goals for primary and early years. He holds a PhD (Social Sciences), MSc (Managerial Economics), and BA (Communication Sciences) from the KU Leuven.

Dr Caitlin Donnelly is a Reader in Education in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW) at Queen's University Belfast. She undertakes qualitative research to advance understanding of the role of schools in divided societies. Dr Donnelly's published work centres on two core areas: Educational Policy—particularly neo-liberalism and managerialism and their effects on educational policy and governance in Northern Ireland and beyond—and Education in Divided Societies—with a focus on how schools can challenge societal division. She has conducted research on school ethos to develop greater conceptual clarity and has published extensively on how schools can either promote or impede more positive relations between groups divided by religious belief, political persuasion, and cultural tradition. She teaches education policy on the Master's in Education programme.



Speakers



Shauna McLaughlin has taught English and English Literature for 21 years. She spent four years seconded to CCEA as Education Manager for English and Literacy, and continues to work for them as an associate writer, researcher and reviser. During her time there Shauna became a Fellow of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust after extensive research in New York and Boston on school curriculums and pedagogies designed to close the socioeconomic achievement gap. On returning to St. Dominic's she spent seven years as an associate lecturer in Queen's Belfast, and is now a part-time English tutor with The Fostering Network. Shauna is also an educational consultant at the BBC writing the Bitesize content for GCSE and A-level English Literature. Outside of education, Shauna is a music writer for The Thin Air, Ireland's music and culture guide and uses her effective questioning skills to host live Q&As with writers and musicians for Arts organisations such as Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival.

Philip McMaster is Vice-Principal for Curriculum and School Improvement at St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls. With more than 16 years' experience across a range of school contexts, he began his career in all-boys, non-selective post-primary schools in North and West Belfast. After six years, he joined a rural co-educational grammar school, serving as Head of Department, Head of Year and Senior Leader, before returning to West Belfast to take up his current post on the Falls Road. Philip is experienced in leading whole-school learning and teaching with a focus on research-informed practice. His session takes a pragmatic approach, translating evidence into workable strategies and drawing lessons that transfer across settings.



Speakers

Gillian Clegg teaches French and Spanish at Friends' School Lisburn, where she also serves as Learning & Teaching Coordinator and Teacher Tutor. She leads the schools' Learning & Teaching group and edits a half termly newsletter which highlights articles and blogs related to educational research. Her interest in initial teacher training has opened up opportunities for her to deliver guest lectures for the Modern Languages PGCE programme at QUB. Having previously completed Google Educator Levels 1 & 2, she continues to develop her knowledge and practice and as she works towards Chartered College status. She has already achieved the Certificate in Evidence-Informed Practice and is currently enrolled on the Development of Teaching Practice Award.



Keynote Speakers & Workshops

Time	Speaker	Venue	Attendees
8.45am	Tea/Coffee	Siena	All Staff
	Exhibitors from local universities promoting post graduate opportunities		
9.30-10.45am	Oracy and Metacognition by Mr N Burns	Study Hall	All Staff
10.45 – 11.00am	Tea coffee	Study Hall	All Staff
11.00-11.45am	Oracy and Metacognition by Mr N Burns	Study Hall	All Staff
11.45-12.30pm	Carousel of Presentations: ➤ Embedding Dialogic Teaching through Action Research by S McLaughlin, St. Dominic's Grammar School ➤ Adaptive Teaching by Prof D Muijs, Queen's University Belfast ➤ Modelling: Making Thinking visible by Ms G Clegg, Friends' School Lisburn ➤ From Scaffolded Tasks to Scaffolded Explanations: Applying Cognitive Science to Adaptive Teaching by Mr P McMaster, St. Dominic's Grammar School ➤ Action Research for Classroom Assistants by Dr Caitlin Donnelly, Queen's University Belfast (Classroom Assistants only)	Business Studies Sociology ML1 Psychology RE2	Staff attend chosen workshop
12.30-1.30pm	Lunch	Siena	All Staff
1.35-3.10pm	Feedback in Adaptive Teaching by Ms K Jones	Study Hall	All Staff





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