**Teacher notes: Enhancing student participation and involvement in discussion**

Making use of the following strategies will move a classroom away from the ‘hands-up’ environment towards one of greater participation by all students. These techniques can

Students may be asked to perform a **think-pair-share**

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question (Reading Rockets, 2016). It helps students to think individually about a topic or answer to a question, gives every student an opportunity to participate in a discussion about the topic material and helps to consolidate information, engage students, and aids students in comprehending information.

**How to Think-Pair-Share (TPS)**

**T** : (Think) Teachers begin by asking specific questions. Students "think" about what they know or have learned about the topic.  
**P** : (Pair) Each student should be paired with another student or a small group to discuss the question. Students share their thinking with their partner or the group.  
**S** : (Share) Teachers expand the "share" into a whole-class discussion.

To enhance student involvement you can **signpost** (let students know ahead of time) that you will be asking each student to contribute one idea each from their group discussion.  
  
Signposting is a technique to help people follow the meaning of what you are saying throughout a conversation, a way to help people to organise what you are saying to them and a way of letting people know what’s coming next so that they can get ready (Leigh, E, 2009). They might be expected to do something, say something or listen for something.  
Letting students know that they each need to produce an answer for their group is just one example of effective signposting, and is invaluable to students who have difficulty with comprehension, inferring and drawing conclusions – such as students who speak English as a second or other language. The importance of making explicit what students are going to do removes the need to guess or infer based on classroom activities, and primes them for action.

An alternative to a hands-up classroom: Increasing Involvement and Engagement using **Icy-pole Sticks.**

One technique for increasing student engagement during classroom questioning is to have the students’ names on icy-pole sticks, so that after you have asked a question, you can pick a name at random (Fletcher-Wood, H, 2014). Sometimes when you ask a student a question in front of their peers, the first thing that goes through their mind is “why are you picking on me?” With the icy-pole sticks, the answer is that it is random. It’s just their lucky day. They have to deal with it and answer the question.

Make sure you also give students appropriate thinking time to support them in answering!