

## READING An Article

### Reading Strategy Predicting Content

Before reading a text, read the title and look at the photos and any other graphic elements. This will help you predict the content of the text.

1 Look at the title and photos. Which statement below best describes the school that you will be reading about? Choose the correct answer. Then read the text and see if you were correct.

- a Students have a lot of freedom here.
- b There are lots of rules here.
- c Boys and girls learn separately.

#### TIP

When answering multiple-choice questions, read the question and all the answer options before choosing your answer. Be careful – some answers may be incorrect even though they use words or expressions from the text.

2 Read the article and choose the correct answer.

- 1 Critical thinking at Michaela is ...
  - a done after students have learned facts on their own
  - b not part of the teaching method
  - c done mainly in groups
  - d based on facts taught in the lesson
- 2 The Ofsted report ...
  - a found that lessons at Michaela are boring
  - b would surprise modern educators
  - c found that students' progress was slow
  - d was both positive and negative
- 3 The writer mentions the tough neighbourhood to show ...
  - a that students there are especially difficult
  - b the difference between the school and its safe environment
  - c why there are many disruptions
  - d that students cannot concentrate at home

3 Complete the sentences according to the information in the article. Use your own words.

- 1 In the corridors at Michaela, students are not allowed ...
- 2 The school is located in an area where there is ...
- 3 Students must not wear ...
- 4 Smartphones are ...
- 5 Critics compare the school to a ...

# Welcome to Britain's Strictest School

There's something strange about the students in the corridors of Michaela Community School. These young people, who are walking to their next class, are silent. Not speaking in the corridors is only one of the many school rules that they've been taught to obey at Michaela, the strictest school in Britain.

Head teacher Katharine Birbalsingh imposes a "no excuses" policy at Michaela, located in an area of London where a third of families live in poverty. In class, students are punished for arriving even one minute late or not doing their homework. The same is true for being impolite to a teacher or turning round during the lesson.

Strict rules apply to every aspect of school life. The corridor carpet has a black line in it for students to follow when they change classrooms. The bathrooms haven't got any mirrors. Make-up and jewellery are banned and uniforms must be perfect. Teachers will confiscate and keep any smartphones they see or hear for up to 16 weeks.

Does it sound like a prison? The school's many critics say so. Birbalsingh has also received a lot of criticism for her teaching methods. At Michaela, all lessons take place with the teacher standing in front of the class. There isn't any group work and the focus is on learning by heart. Many modern educators emphasise independent and critical thinking, believing students can learn facts on their own. Birbalsingh also believes in critical thinking, but only after students have acquired facts and knowledge from their teachers.



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WORDS FROM THE TEXT

4 Find words or expressions in the text that mean:

- 1 not more than (lines 13-18)
- 2 information (lines 19-28)
- 3 until now (lines 29-35)
- 4 violent or with a lot of crime (lines 36-41)
- 5 quantity (lines 36-41)

5 Decide if the following sentences are true or false. Pay attention to the words in colour.

- 1 Teachers **emphasise** things they think are important.
- 2 People who live in **poverty** have a lot of money.
- 3 If you **turn round**, you look at what is above you.
- 4 If you **acquire** a skill, you learn it.
- 5 People speak quietly during a **lively** discussion.
- 6 People are pleased when they **achieve** a goal.

COLLOCATIONS WITH MAKE AND TAKE

There are many collocations in English with the verbs *make* and *take*.

All the lessons **take place** with the teacher in front of the class.

The committee **makes sure** the schools are meeting the teaching standards.

How do you say these collocations in your language?

6 Copy and complete the diagrams with the expressions below.

progress | pride in | for granted | sense a mistake | advantage of | place | sure



7 Complete the sentences with some of the expressions you formed in Exercise 6.

- 1 I don't understand what you're saying. It doesn't ... .
- 2 You should ... this wonderful opportunity.
- 3 We've been able to ... , but there's still a lot of work to do.
- 4 You get points off if you ... in grammar.
- 5 I am happy that my parents can see I ... my schoolwork.
- 6 Teachers work very hard, but students often ... them ... .



Head teacher Katharine Birbalsingh having lunch with students at Michaela Community School

All this sounds very old-fashioned, but so far, it's been working. Michaela got top marks in its first inspection by Ofsted, the committee that makes sure schools are meeting the government's teaching standards. The inspectors were impressed by the lively teaching that took place, by the progress the students had made and by their positive attitudes towards learning.

The most amazing thing is that students at Michaela say they love it. They'll tell you that they are happy at school and take pride in what they've achieved. Although they live in a tough neighbourhood, inside school, they feel safe. With no bullying or disruptions, they're free to concentrate on learning. And they are learning an enormous amount.



LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

- 1 Look at the false friends underlined in the text. How do you say them in your language?
- 2 Which of the following words from the text have the same verb and noun form?  
progress | obey | focus | amount

PRONUNCIATION

- 3 Look at the words below from the text. In which words are the letters *-gh* silent? Listen and check your answers.  
although | tough | taught | neighbourhood

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YOUR OUTLOOK CRITICAL THINKING

In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of Michaela School?