



Core signals

“Let’s understand what happened.”

“This isn’t about blame.”

“What can we learn from this?”

“Thank you for raising it.”

“Let’s focus on what we can change.”

“We’ll work through this together.”

“It’s OK to get things wrong.”

“Mistakes help us improve.”



How learning is signalled

Signals we use

- Curiosity before judgement
- Calm, measured responses
- Focus on actions and systems
- Openness to review and change

Signals we avoid

- Blame or personal criticism
- Defensive explanations
- Public correction or embarrassment
- Avoiding the conversation



LEARNING-NOT-BLAME SIGNALS

How we respond when something goes wrong.

What This Tool Is

A shared clarity tool that helps teams respond to mistakes and issues in ways that support learning rather than blame.

Why This Tool Helps

Because learning stops when blame takes over

How teams respond when things go wrong determines whether people speak up next time.

Because blame creates silence

Fear of fault discourages honesty and early issue-raising.

Because learning requires safety

People only reflect openly when they feel safe from judgement.

Because focus matters

Shifting attention from who is at fault to what happened keeps conversations productive.

Because responses shape culture

How mistakes are handled signals what really matters in a team.

Because learning prevents repeat issues

Understanding causes leads to better decisions and fewer recurring problems.

Who This Tool Is For

Anyone working in a busy school environment who wants mistakes and issues to lead to learning rather than fear or silence.



When to Use This Tool

Use when you notice:

- Defensiveness after something goes wrong
- Hesitation to admit mistakes
- Fear of being blamed
- Issues being hidden or delayed
- Tension following feedback or correction

Ideal moments:

- After mistakes or misunderstandings
- When something hasn't gone to plan
- During reviews or reflections
- When emotions are running high
- Before issues escalate

How to Use Learning-Not-Blame Signals

1 Pause the reaction

Notice emotional responses before responding.

2 Choose a learning signal

Use language that shifts the focus to understanding, not fault.

3 Stay curious

Ask what happened and why, without judgement.

4 Focus on change

Identify what can be adjusted going forward.

5 Reinforce safety

Acknowledge the courage it took to raise the issue.

Important to remember:

- * Blame discourages honesty
- * Learning depends on psychological safety
- * Responses matter more than intentions
- * Without using learning-not-blame signals, psychological safety often collapses the first time something goes wrong.

Sequence: Notice issues early → Explore with curiosity → Learn and respond without blame

Notice. Act. Prevent.

How we respond when something goes wrong.