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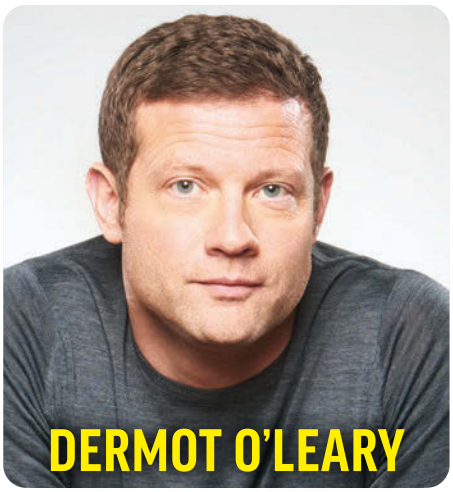

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"I only 'found myself' academically at 16"

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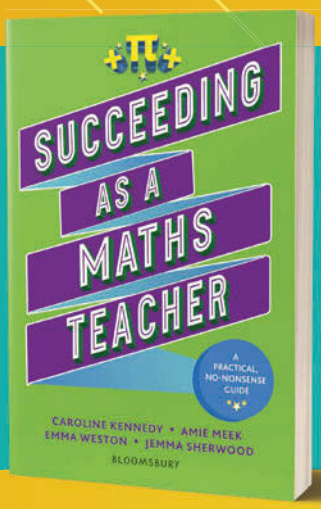

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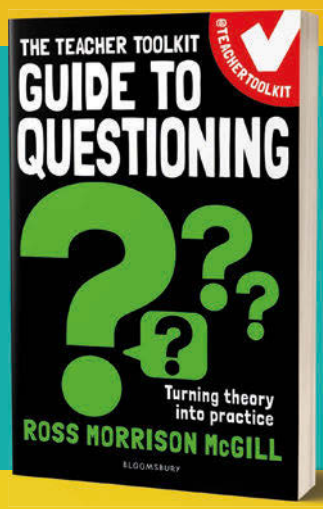
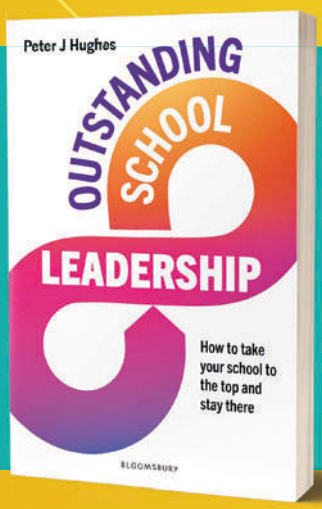


Ross Morrison McGill explores how teachers can use questioning to identify gaps in knowledge and encourage pupils to analyse, evaluate and actively engage in learning.

9781801993296 | 9 Nov 2023



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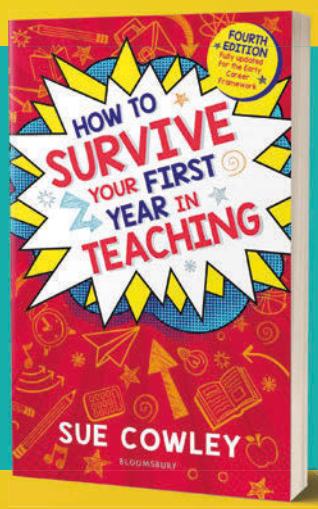
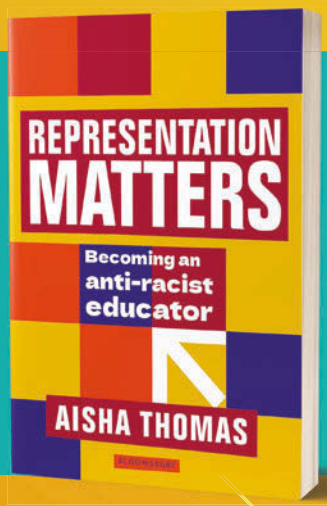


An updated edition of Sue Cowley's bestselling book to support early career teachers. Includes new chapters on effectively managing workload and gives plenty of useful teacher wellbeing tips.

9781472989451



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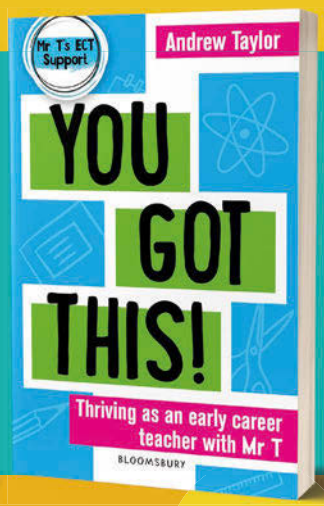

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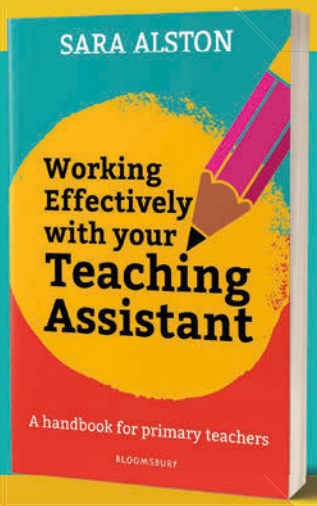

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FROM THE EDITOR

"Welcome...

I write these words just as this year's results season is getting underway. It's an emotionally intense time for all the students opening those envelopes, of course – but also for the teachers looking on, who'll be finding out whether those revision lessons made an appreciable difference or not, but also what their school's near-term prospects are going to be with regards to league tables and its ability to attract new recruits.

No one's denying the crucial importance of school assessment – we have an assessment-themed section starting on page 29 of this issue, after all – but it can sometimes feel more like an instrument for encouraging different schools and communities to compete with each other, rather than a yardstick for measuring students' understanding, knowledge and progress towards their goals.

Then again, maybe that's the idea. As a philosophical project, the MAT revolution we've seen unfold over the past decade appeared to serve several purposes – some professed, some not. Yes, up to a point it formalised the inter-school pooling of resources, expertise and oversight at scale, and enabled forms of directed school improvement and staff development across different parts of the country in ways that weren't previously possible.

At the same time, it also had the effect of sidelining the role historically performed by Local Authorities in school oversight and governance, and prompted those now responsible for the day-to-day running of most secondary schools in the land to think and behave like business owners.

As anyone with even a passing knowledge of the education sector circa 2010 to 2015 will know, that last detail gave rise to a fair number of issues. Yes, those lurid stories involving 'preferred school suppliers' who happened to be owned by a MAT's CEO (or one of their family members) have receded somewhat, following a rightful clampdown on such practices. Yet we're still left with a landscape where schools are often encouraged to think like private entities, attracting custom (students, families) and shedding complications (SEND support, challenging behaviour) where they can.

Given where we currently are in the electoral calendar, there are whispers in some quarters that the MAT era may be drawing to a close, but I wouldn't be so sure. It takes years before the true impact of major education reforms can be properly assessed, and for all the profession's success at responding to the disruptions of COVID, very few have the appetite for another massive organisational overhaul.

But more robust, universal mechanisms for inter-school knowledge sharing and assistance? A profession that's far more collaborative than competitive? Now that would be something...

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:

Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher

Matt MacGuire is an assistant headteacher

Hannah Day is a head of art, media and film

Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher

Natasha Devon MBE is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner

Ian Stacey is a product design and food teacher

KEEP IN TOUCH!
Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at **teachwire.net/newsletter**

Essential reading:

14 **Something is broken**
How systemic failures are letting down students with SEND

66 **You okay, Y10?**
The support your fourth years don't know they need

Recruit those readers
Practical ideas for turning students into book lovers

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SEP/OCT '23

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TS Focus – English

Learning Lab

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Publishers: Joe Carter, Sam Reubin, Richard Stebbing

Editor: Callum Fauser, callum.fauser@artichokehq.com, 01206 505115

Group Advertising Manager: Samantha Law, samantha.law@artichokehq.com, 01206 505499

Advertising Manager: Ria Bentham, ria.bentham@artichokehq.com, 01206 505928

Deputy Advertising Manager: Hannah Jones, hannah.jones@artichokehq.com, 01206 505924

Senior Account Manager: Alfie Bennett, alfie.bennett@artichokehq.com, 01206 505996

Art editors: Richard Allen, Sarah Barajas

Customer services: secondary@artichokehq.com

Accounts: artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

Published by: Artichoke Media, Suites 2 & 4, Global House, Global Park, Eastgates, CO1 2TJ

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The newsletter

Grab a coffee and spend five minutes exploring the lighter side of CPD...

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

#MOTIVE

Ah, youthful postwar rebellion. Mods and rockers going at it hammer and tongs on the beaches of Brighton. Running battles between punks and... well, pretty much everyone in the late 70s. In the absence of National Service, that's what we all did back then to toughen ourselves up, you know. Yes, there was the occasional broken jaw or two, but there was a *cause*, wasn't there? People were part of a *tribe*. You knew where you stood.

Not like *now*. I mean, look at these – TokTok, is it? TokTik? I can never remember – teens and this #motive hashtag they're attaching to videos of themselves engaging in civil unrest in Oxford Street, Southend and probably your local High Street any day now. It's all so... *nihilistic*.

Apparently, this term 'motive' refers to any occasion for getting together and loosening one's inhibitions while possibly imbibing alcohol, or illicit substances or both. In practice, there seems to be a lot of standing around, videoing each other and expecting something to happen that's not actually happening. But might. Why?

Well, yes, the youth clubs got shut down, the music venues were turned into flats and the sports ground was bought by developers, but still. *That's no excuse.*

DO SAY

"#beachmotive was lit"

DON'T SAY

"Professor Plum, in the study, with the candlestick"

BEAT THE BUDGET

What are we talking about?

Don't Be Fooled Schools Programme

Who is it for?

KS3

What's on offer?

An education pack containing lesson materials and notes to help teach about the risks of becoming a 'money mule' (individuals, often youths, whose bank accounts are exploited by criminals for money laundering purposes).

How might teachers use the resources?

Each pack contains cross-curricular activities for use in English, drama and art & design lessons, alongside a poster, flyer and assembly presentation.

Where is it available?

smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Money_Mules

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"Sometimes you have to go [to the home] or sometimes you have to text the parent in the morning. Sometimes you just have to do whatever is possible."

- Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, when asked if headteachers should pick up absent pupils from their homes

Think of a number...

93%

percentage of trainee teachers awarded qualified teacher status in 2021/22, compared to 95% the previous year

Source: DfE

20,376

The number of defibrillators delivered to 17,862 state schools since January 2022

Source: DfE

24%

Of parents believe that Ofsted inspection reports are useful to them in their current form

Source: Parentkind

ONE FOR THE WALL

"The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt"

Sylvia Plath

Future shock

Last month saw UNESCO issue a global report on the uses of technology in education, criticising what it views as a lack of 'appropriate' governance and regulation in the area.

The organisation's 'Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?' report sets out four key questions for education policymakers and stakeholders, beginning with '*Is it appropriate?*' The report's authors cite evidence showing a reduction in learning benefits when edtech is used in the absence of qualified educators, and observe that fewer than a quarter of countries presently ban smartphone use in schools, despite being "Proven to be a distraction to learning."

In the context of the next question, '*Is it equitable?*' the report points to the estimated half a billion students globally who failed to benefit from the mass adoption of remote learning amid the COVID pandemic, and calls for all nations to set minimum connectivity standards for schools by 2030.

Discussion around the third question, '*Is it scaleable?*', stresses the need for impartial evidence of edtech's effectiveness, and highlights the neglect of basic digital needs, even as the wider edtech market expands.

The final question, '*Is it sustainable?*' meanwhile highlights the necessity of possessing basic literacy before being able to meaningfully benefit from digital solutions, and better ICT training for educators as threats from 'ransomware' and other cybersecurity attacks continue to grow.

Download the full report via **bit.ly/ts126-NL1**

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

Forget the media-friendly soundbites – what else was in those announcements and letters you missed?

THE SPEECH:

Education unions call off strikes and accept STRB pay recommendation

WHO? Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT General Secretary
WHEN? 31st July 2023

"The prospect of NASUWT members taking coordinated strike action this autumn has forced the government to accept the STRB pay recommendation and ensure that all schools receive additional funding to deliver it.

Teachers and headteachers should benefit from more money in their pockets at a time when they are struggling with rising interest rates, rocketing rents and mortgages and persistent high inflation.

Whilst NASUWT members are willing to accept the STRB pay award recommendation, they do not believe that it is sufficient redress for the impact of more than a decade of real-terms pay cuts, where the value of teachers' pay has declined by 25%. Furthermore, our members do not agree that sufficient action is yet being taken to address their concerns over excessive workload and long working hours.Teachers and headteachers are already working excessive hours in breach of the statutory Working Time Regulations. This simply cannot be allowed to continue. A statutory working time limit would help keep more teachers and headteachers in the job."

THE LETTER:

Minister for Women and Equalities writes to Ofsted

FROM? Kemi Badenoch MP
TO? Amanda Spielman ,Ofsted Chief Inspector
WHEN? 22nd June 2023

I would like to request that Ofsted carry out a snap inspection of Rye College, in East Sussex. This is following the widely circulated recording of a teacher acting inappropriately regarding her pupils' beliefs about sex, gender and a fellow pupil who claimed to identify as a cat, which in my view raises issues about safeguarding at the school." As you will be aware, the UK courts have ruled that gender critical beliefs – the belief that sex is biological and immutable, that people cannot change their sex and that sex is distinct from gender-identity – are classed as a philosophical belief worthy of respect in a democratic society and are therefore a protected characteristic under section 10 of the Equality Act.

6-7 JULY 2023 Festival of Education | 3 OCTOBER 2023 DPPC2023 | 6 OCTOBER 2023 The National Education Show – Cardiff

20-21 NOVEMBER

EdTech World Forum 2023
Kensington Conference and Event Centre
edtechconferences.london

Those keen to get acquainted with the bleeding edge of edtech should clear a space in their diaries for this combined meeting of minds and networking event. On the agenda will be presentations concerning the future of assessment and the transformative potential of AI, alongside insights into areas ranging from schools' COVID responses and metacognition to speech recognition.

3 OCTOBER 2023

DPPC2023
Online
dppc23.orcula.co.uk

School staff, governors and others working in the education sector wil want to note this free online conference organised by the Information Commissioner's Office – the UK's data protection regulator. Those tuning in will get to take part in workshops led by ICO staff offering advice on dealing with subject access requests, responsible data sharing and how to respond to FoA requests.

6 OCTOBER 2023

The National Education Show – Cardiff
City Hall, Cardiff
nationaleducationshow.com

The second of this year's National Education Show events rolls into Cardiff this October. Attendees will get to choose from over 40 CPD seminars, take advantage of some great networking opportunities and have the chance to check out some of the very latest products and services aimed at the education sector by taking a tour of the show's extensive exhibition area.

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TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Away day with snakes

In the early 90s I undertook a yearlong teacher exchange programme to Western Australia. As part of the varied activity sessions organised for a group of 12 challenging Y10 students, I was asked to accompany said group on an 'away day' trip to an uninhabited island by the name of Carnac, situated approximately one hour off the coast of Fremantle.

Joining me on the trip was a fellow 'Pommie' and former PE colleague from the UK. We were duly transported from the port of Fremantle to the island on an ex-military boat, with the journey taking just over an hour. A detail worth remembering.

Upon reaching the island we disembarked, and could just make out the faint parting words of the boat's skipper – "*Don't get between the sea lions and the waterline!*" Guess where I was standing. As the boat moved further away from the shore, he added, "*Watch out for the snakes. Stamp your feet as you walk!*"

The next four hours on Carnac proved fairly uneventful – up until the point when two girls in the group rushed up to us teachers to say that the boys were throwing rocks and stones at a great many snakes. We went to investigate, and quickly saw that the boys in question needed to be rapidly moved away from the dozen or so snakes they'd managed to provoke, which they duly were.

I subsequently learned that Carnac Island was, in fact, one the most dangerous islands situated off the Australian mainland, and inhabited by some of the most venomous snakes in the world – including tiger snakes, the venomous bite from which can kill a human within 30 minutes.

A one-hour boat ride. In the pre-mobile phones 90s. Health and safety has come a long way since...

Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at schoolhumour.co.uk

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

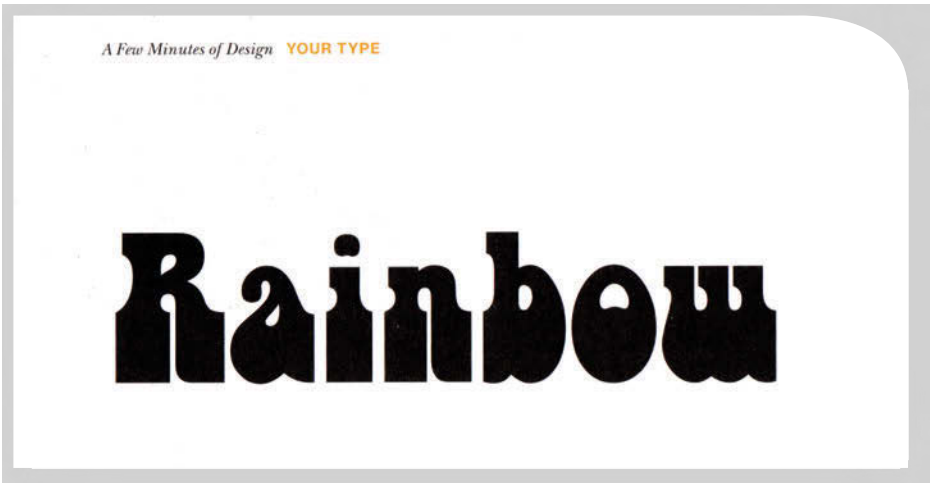
#28 YOUR TYPE

Look carefully at the word shown below. Write your name in the same typeface.

Are there clues to any letters that are in your name but not in the sample?

Practice drawing the common elements of the letters. What do the curves look like? The line thicknesses?

What gives the letters their unique character?



Get Into Film

THE COLOR PURPLE (1985, 2H 34M, AGES 14+)

CURRICULUM LINKS: *English literature, history, citizenship*

Adapted from the acclaimed Alice Walker novel, *The Color Purple* chronicles the turbulent life of Celie, who has rarely known happiness in the American Deep South of the 1900s. When her husband separates Celie from her sister, she is plunged into a lonely, unforgiving world.

However, Celie's life changes with the appearance of sultry singer Shug Avery, who gives her the determination to become a strong woman. Directed by Steven Spielberg, this is a beautifully shot, life-affirming tale of personal triumph, love and hope.

Discussion questions:

- What do you know about the novel *The Color Purple*?
- What do you think the title is intended to represent?
- What was the significance of Celie's relationship with Nettie?

Ahead of Black History Month, explore Into Film's curated feature films and shorts, accompanied by an extensive range of teaching resources. For more information, visit intofilm.org/BlackHistoryExperiences

Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Claudia Lewis @MBDscience

Withdrawing my labour, knowing I won't get paid, on a day when I have zero lessons and 80 exam papers to mark for Tuesday, isn't an easy choice, but the alternative is that things continue like this and we keep losing qualified teachers and that's worse.

Chaotic Neutral Teacher @chaoticteach

There's still this baffling idea that if you're not in school for 5000 hours a day or working non-stop in your evenings/at weekends, then you can't possibly be doing a good job. This is such an outdated mentality and not taught to current trainees. Please stop normalising it.

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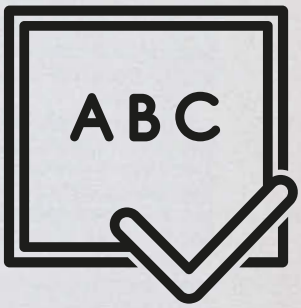
The Vocab Clinic

Support your students towards better language use, with the help of our resident word-wizard, **Alex Quigley**...

TRY THIS TODAY: 'FAULTY FORTY'



A persistent reality for secondary school students trying to use ambitious academic vocabulary is that their spellings will be wrong. With traditional spelling tests having been shown to be rather limited in addressing this issue, we instead need vocabulary building strategies to be accompanied by a focus on commonly misspelled words in secondary school.

A useful way to highlight the issue of academic misspellings is to cohere a list for the school or trust. A spelling list labelled the 'Faulty Forty', for example, could be used to highlight common culprits, such as words like 'because', 'belief' and 'business'. Different subjects could then chip in with suggestions of their own, such as 'pasteurisation' in science, or 'metaphor' in English.

Cracking the academic code

Repetition has been at the heart of speech and writing intended to make a point since the dawn of civilisation. Crafting convincing arguments in history or RE, or writing a speech for an English assignment, can often involve the use of some clever rhetorical devices like 'anaphora'.

'Anaphora' describes the trick of repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of sentences, or clauses within sentences. For example, '*Stay safe. Stay well. Stay at home.*' If overused, it can turn your address into a hackneyed failure – but when carefully deployed, it can make for highly convincing arguments, with words that leave a mark.

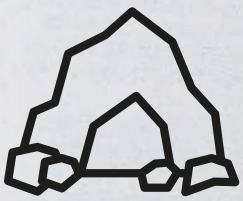
DO THEY KNOW?

The shortest sentence in the English language featuring a single word is 'Go.'

ONE FOR: BIOLOGY STUDENTS

CHLOROPLAST

Derives from: The Greek '*khlōros*' meaning 'greenish yellow', and '*plast*', meaning 'formed, moulded'.
Means: A type of membrane in plants that conducts photosynthesis.
Related terms: *Chloroform, chloride, chlorophyll, cholera, plasma*.
Note: Chloroplasts tend to be disc-shaped, but can also be shaped like stars.



One word at a time

When the world recently focused its attention on the tragedy that befell the *Titan* mini-submersible and its passengers, the word 'subterranean' regularly appeared in news headlines. It's a word with a simple enough root from the Latin '*subterraneus*' – with '*sub*' meaning 'below', and '*terra*' meaning, 'earth, the ground'.

The word has a fairly literal usage in geography, but in other curriculum subjects it can convey more sinister connotations of covert behaviours and similar. 'Sub' is one of the more useful and common English prefixes, with many potential uses in academic language – e.g. *subconscious*, *submarine* and *subsidiary*.

I DON'T THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS...

PROOF

In mathematics

A rigorous mathematical argument that demonstrates a clear truth

In history

Evidence or an argument to establish the truth

Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of *Closing the Writing Gap* and *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundations as National Content Manager

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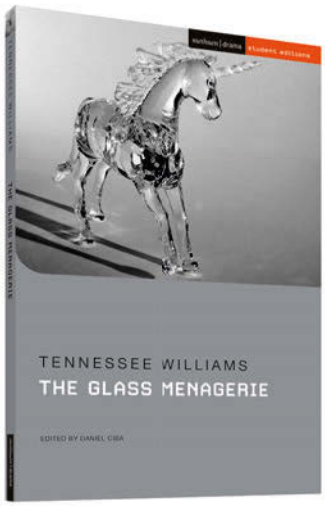

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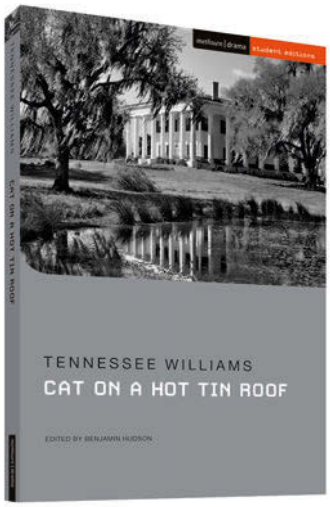

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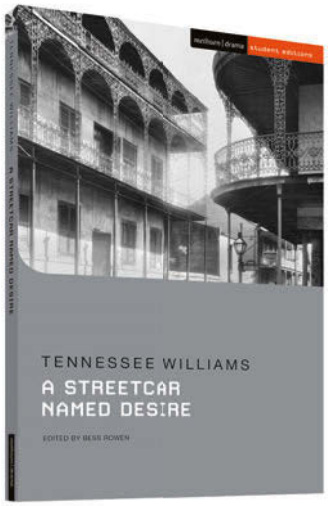

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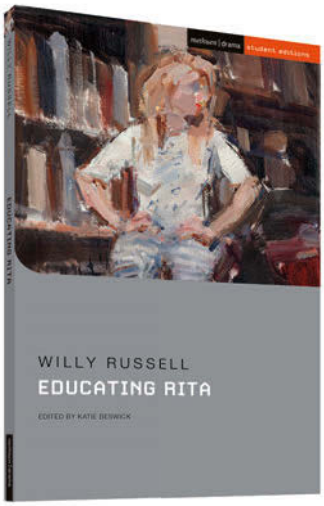

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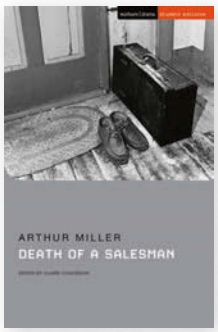

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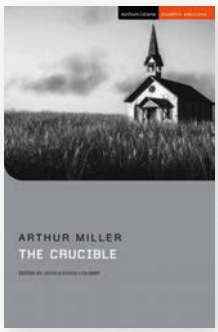

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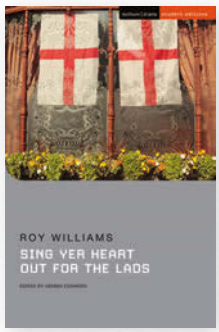

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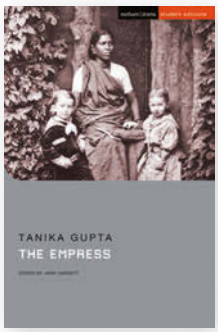

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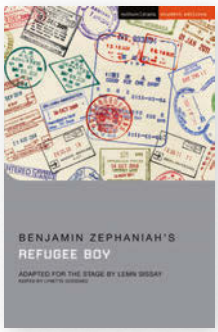

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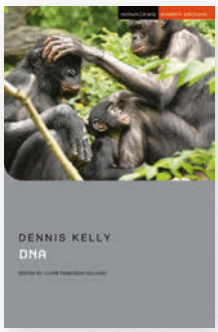

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[MATHS PROBLEM]

RECURRING DECIMALS

Students are often confused about recurring decimals and their relationships to fractions

In this lesson, students compare terminating and recurring decimals and the fractions equivalent to them

THE DIFFICULTY

Look at these quantities. Do any of them have the same value? Put them in order of size, from smallest to largest.

$\frac{1}{3}$ $\quad 0.33 \quad$ $\frac{3}{10}$ $\quad$ $\frac{33}{99}$ $\quad$ $\frac{0.3}{1}$ $\quad 0.3 \quad$ $\frac{3}{9}$ $\quad 0.\dot{3} \quad$ $\frac{33}{100}$

Students may think that $\frac{1}{3}$ and 0.3 or 0.33 are the same, but although this is ***approximately*** true it is not exactly true.

There are actually three different numbers in this list, and the correct order is:

$$\frac{3}{10} = \frac{0.3}{1} = 0.3 \quad < \quad \frac{33}{100} = 0.33 \quad < \quad \frac{1}{3} = \frac{3}{9} = \frac{33}{99} = 0.\dot{3}$$

Students might notice that 0.3 and 0.33 are **terminating** decimals, and $0.\dot{3}$ is **recurring**, but all three numbers are **rational**, because each can be expressed as a fraction containing only integers. This contrasts with numbers such as $\sqrt{3}$ or 4π, which are **irrational**, and ***can't*** be expressed as fractions of integers.

THE SOLUTION

Using written methods or calculators, convert each of these fractions into a decimal.
Say whether the decimal is terminating or recurring.
Describe what you notice about your answers.
(Answers are given in red below.)

Fraction	*Decimal*	*Terminating or recurring?*
$\frac{7}{10}$	0.7	T
$\frac{7}{9}$	$0.\dot{7}$	R
$\frac{7}{100}$	0.07	T
$\frac{7}{99}$	$0.\dot{0}\dot{7}$	R
$\frac{37}{100}$	0.37	T
$\frac{37}{99}$	$0.\dot{3}\dot{7}$	R
$\frac{37}{1000}$	0.037	T
$\frac{37}{999}$	$0.\dot{0}3\dot{7}$	R

As students complete this task, they will be confronted with the difference between something like 0.7 and $0.\dot{7}$, forcing them ***not*** to treat them as identical. They may conjecture (correctly) that $0.\dot{p} = \frac{p}{9}$ and $0.\dot{p}\dot{q} = \frac{pq}{99}$, etc., for any digits p and q. They may also notice that any integer fraction with $10, 100, \ldots$ in the denominator gives a terminating decimal. But it is ***not*** the case that any fraction with $9, 99, \ldots$ in the denominator gives a recurring decimal, and students might try to find counter examples (e.g., $\frac{990}{99}$).

Checking for understanding

Write each of these decimal numbers as a simplified fraction:

$0.\dot{8} \quad 0.8 \quad 0.\dot{0}\dot{8} \quad 0.3\dot{8} \quad 0.38 \quad 0.\dot{8}\dot{3} \quad 0.\dot{8}0\dot{3} \quad 0.803 \quad 0.0\dot{8} \quad 0.3\dot{8}$

Put your answers in order of size, from smallest to largest.

The answers are:

$\frac{8}{9} \quad \frac{4}{5} \quad \frac{8}{99} \quad \frac{38}{99} \quad \frac{19}{50} \quad \frac{83}{99} \quad \frac{803}{999} \quad \frac{803}{1000} \quad \frac{8}{90} \quad \frac{7}{18}$

and in order of size they are:

$\frac{8}{99} \quad \frac{8}{90} \quad \frac{19}{50} \quad \frac{38}{99} \quad \frac{7}{18} \quad \frac{4}{5} \quad \frac{803}{1000} \quad \frac{803}{999} \quad \frac{83}{99} \quad \frac{8}{9}$

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. foster77.co.uk, blog.foster77.co.uk

A compromised system

Dave Clements explains how post-pandemic behaviour, insufficient resources and academic pressures are depriving children with SEND of a school education

Why are so many children with SEND being thrown out of school?

The latest school returns show that this group are more than three times as likely to be suspended as other children, and four times as likely to be permanently excluded. Unless they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that is, and all the support that should come with it – in which case, they're only *twice* as likely to be shown out the school gates, never to return.

Typically, these students will be excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour. But like the suspension and exclusion letters sent home that their parents could paper their walls with, this doesn't begin to describe what's really going on.

Unfair treatment

There are other groups of children who are also disproportionately likely to be suspended or excluded from school. Such sanctions are applied far more often to boys than to girls, for instance. The same goes for poorer kids in receipt of free school meals.

The difference for young people with SEND, of course, is that their disadvantage isn't material in origin, or related to any sex-based behaviours or expectations. Instead, it's a consequence of living with a learning disability, autism, ADHD or one or more of a variety of other conditions that can impact upon their behaviour or abilities to cope with the school day.

Children with autism, for instance, are prone to meltdowns – uncontrolled outbursts which, to the untrained eye, amount to a violent lashing out at whoever or whatever gets in their way. Only they're not being naughty. These children can suffer with anxiety, be 'triggered' by the slightest disruption to the school routine, or become overstimulated or overwhelmed by the everyday features of a typical school environment.

Why should these children – who already face difficulties with everyday experiences their peers are able to manage – be dealt with so harshly? I think most of us would agree this is extremely unfair. Punishing children for something they can't help is fundamentally wrong and needlessly cruel.

They have as much right to an education – and a good education, at that – as any other child. Many will be just as academically capable, perhaps even more so, when compared to their peers.

Choosing to settle

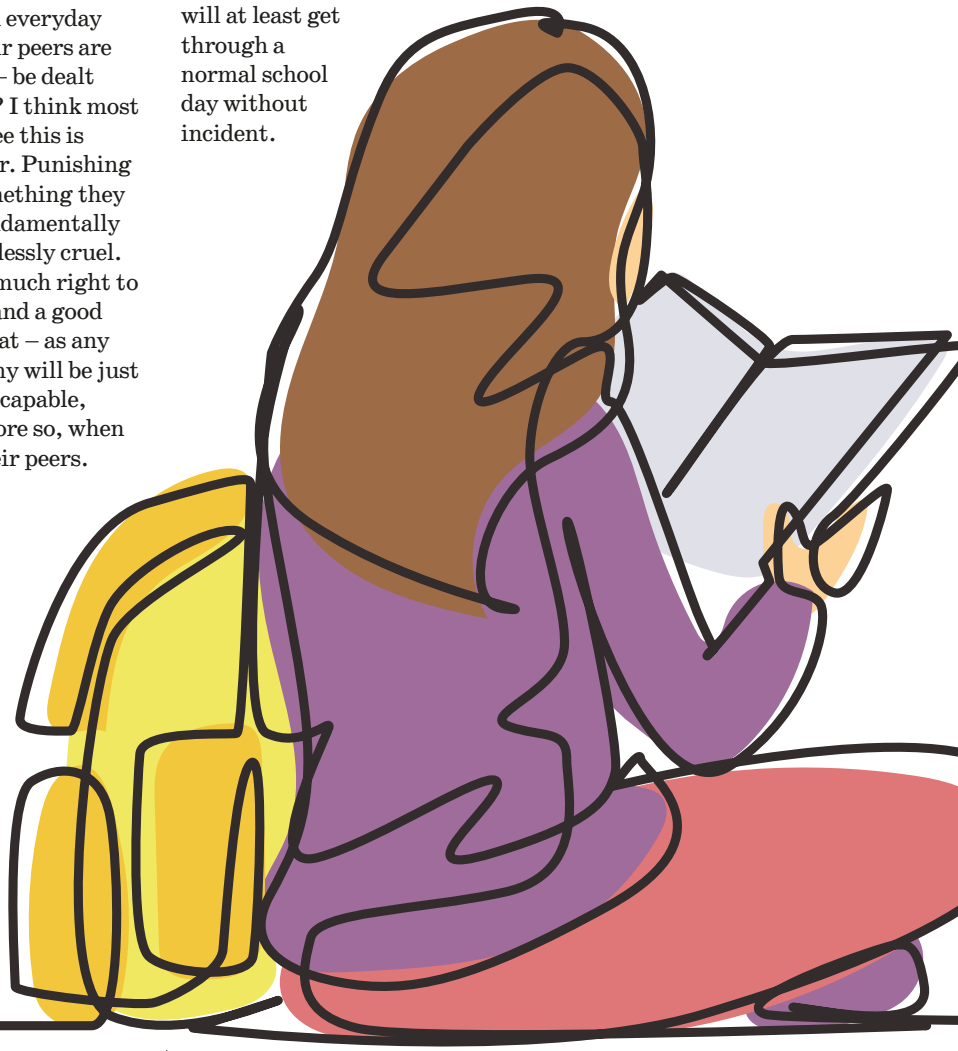
And yet, as a parent to a child with SEND and as a school governor, I'm also keenly aware of the significant demands their requirements can place on schools.

Some schools will try hard to cater to their students' special educational needs. Others will genuinely struggle to manage the impact their presence can have on other children's learning. Others still may turn hostile by proceeding to blame the parents and variously refer them to social services, insist they attend parenting courses or 'off-roll' their children.

As a consequence, some parents may feel they have no choice but to settle for a less academic 'nurturing' school over a successful 'exam factory', in the hope that their child will at least get through a normal school day without incident.

On the other hand, they may have to search far and wide for a special or specialist school – you soon learn that there's a difference – which will finally meet their child's particular needs.

It's not unusual for parents to start off by refusing to accept that their child has SEND, but such are the challenges involved, they soon enough end up hoping for a conclusive diagnosis and all the support this would open up; battling with their school and LA to respond accordingly.



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I believe that this is at least part of the reason why the number of children in England with EHCPs, and thereby getting more funding for in-school support, has doubled over the past eight years to half a million.

A loss of belief

Besides this, there's much else going on both in and outside of classrooms. An explosion of mental health problems; growing misbehaviour issues; a worrying rise in anxious school-refusers – all long-standing issues made worse by closures during the pandemic.

That suggests to me that what we're looking at isn't 'just' a special educational needs problem. Nearly 1 in 4 pupils are persistently absent, missing 10% or more of their class time. According to Lee Elliot Major and Andy Eyles at the London School of Economics, "Some families appear to have lost their belief that attending school regularly is necessary for their children."

If your child also has a special educational need, and if the school isn't able to support them effectively, then you may be even more sceptical of the benefits to the education *they're unable to access anyway*. In these cases, it's all too easy for parents and schools to arrive at what seems, given the circumstances, to be a mutually beneficial agreement – keeping the child at home.

These are the sorts of compromises that parents of children with special educational needs frequently have to make. All because the system as it stands simply isn't working.

Alphabet soup

I can't be the only parent who doubts the utility of the alphabet soup surrounding special educational needs. PDA (pathological demand avoidance) and ODD (oppositional defiant disorder), for instance, both describe behaviours that might have once caused a child to be considered 'prone to getting into trouble', and therefore in need of adult guidance.

"Punishing children for something they can't help is fundamentally wrong and needlessly cruel"

This may well have led to unfair outcomes on occasion – but by instead regarding them as psychologically troubled and in need of support, are we equally failing to address needs that directly result from a lack of discipline or effective socialisation?

Doubts around the validity of ADHD diagnoses were recently raised following a *BBC Panorama* investigation into private assessments for the condition. A number of firms exposed in the programme were found to have had a remarkably high 'success' rate.

At the same time, however, we've seen girls with autism often underdiagnosed – or wrongly diagnosed with an eating disorder – because of their tendency to 'mask' their condition, rather than acting out as boys might do. Could it be that we're both over-diagnosing and under-diagnosing for conditions associated with special educational needs?

Considerable mismatch

There are no easy answers to be had here – but the increasingly therapeutic approaches that schools are adopting, and the mental health support they're now encouraged to provide, don't seem to be helping children with special educational needs all that much.

By effectively putting every child 'on the couch', these tendencies could end up redefining what might be better understood as disciplinary issues, while simultaneously diverting much-needed resources away from those most in need of them.

Despite something of a collapse in adult authority across broader society, schools are in many ways much stricter than they used to be. Consequently, they are less accommodating environments for – and less tolerant of behaviours associated with – children with special educational needs.

There are important questions to be asked about the support available for these children, both in and outside school, and whether the type of school provision they're in is even right for them in the first place.

The figures on suspensions and exclusions would appear to suggest that there's a considerable mismatch between these children's needs and what they're currently getting. Whatever the reasons for that – as likely to be cultural and social as they are practical – it can't be allowed to go on.

The damage being done to the education of these children and to the wider school community, by failing to give them the support they need, deserves to be a scandal.

IN BRIEF

What's the issue?
Official statistics appear to indicate that children with SEND are at a disproportionately higher risk of being suspended or excluded from school

What's being said?
Parents have spoken of having to argue with schools and LAs to obtain the support their child needs, while schools and LAs point to a lack of accessible resources and expertise at the local level

What's really happening?
A ratcheting up of the expectations now placed on schools and pupils has led to a pathologising of conditions once been considered behavioural in nature, which is squeezing the capacity of schools to provide SEND support to those most in need of it

The takeaway
The available data and testimonials of families clearly show that the education system in its current form is ill-suited to allocating SEND support where it's needed, with schools consequently opting for the path of least resistance – namely 'off-rolling' students with SEND

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Dave Clements is a local government policy advisor and associate of the Education Forum at the Academy of Ideas

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Help them help themselves

Hannah Heron looks at how we can employ metacognitive strategies to help pupils build robust independent study habits

Preparing for GCSE assessments isn't easy. It requires students to exercise self-discipline and harness an array of effective independent study habits – yet the problem, as every teacher knows, is supporting them in building these habits to start with.

The bad news is that there's no easy or quick fix. Students don't become independent learners automatically. It takes time, effort and teacher investment – but research into metacognition and self-regulation can at least suggest how we might approach ingraining such skills in our daily classroom practice.

Making the implicit explicit

The EEF's 'Metacognition and self-regulation' guidance report (see bit.ly/ts126-EEF1) cites research from Barry Zimmerman on effective strategies for independent learning, which include:

- Setting specific short-term goals
- Adopting powerful strategies for attaining those goals
- Monitoring performance for signs of progress
- Restructuring one's physical and social context to make it compatible with one's goals
- Managing time use efficiently
- Self-evaluating one's methods
- Attributing causation to results and adapting future methods

This list of strategies will be familiar to many teachers, but they must be contextualised or translated according to subject-specific study tasks if they're to be made real for students.

Pre-flight checks

Before students can use independent study habits to their advantage, they need to know what they look like. To that end, teachers can plan in time for students to monitor their preparation progress, such as discussing their revision plan, or study plan for GCSE coursework. Zimmerman's point about monitoring performance could, for example, take the form of a 'Pre-flight checklist' for a student's revision plan. If used daily by students, this could help them manage their time use more effectively and self-evaluate their methods more reliably.

There are two key strategies teachers can employ when preparing their pupils for assessments:

1. Modelling the actions of expert learners via 'Think alouds'

Thinking about how we, as expert learners, would approach a task, as well as the knowledge and strategies we would bring to it, can help to make the implicit explicit when modelling.

'Think alouds' enable teachers to narrate their thought processes to students. If, for example, we were to explain the reasons *why* we are choosing a particular planning strategy for writing a timed essay, pupils may start to make more informed decisions on the most effective strategy they could choose when faced with a similar learning task themselves.

We might also 'Think Aloud' various options – such as using a timer, or Zimmerman's 'restructuring' of the space, which might involve taking yourself off to the library to do some essay writing.

2. Plan the teaching of effective study strategies into the curriculum

Teaching students powerful study strategies is key to developing strategic and independent learners. To ensure students can approach independent learning and exam preparation with confidence, it's important to build in the teaching of study skills, alongside subject content, as part of your curriculum design.

Students need explicit teaching of the '*how*', '*when*' and '*why*' in order to use strategies like self-testing with flashcards Students will also need training to pick the right strategy for the right assessment.

For instance, using flashcards to prepare for an extended essay assessment may prove ineffective in comparison to strategies linked with developing a clear argument, or similar.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hannah Heron is a content specialist at the Education Endowment Foundation

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The 7-step model from Recommendation 2 of the EEF's 'Metacognition and self-regulated learning' guidance report can be used to explicitly teach new strategies, whilst supporting teachers in modelling their own metacognitive process.

Schools seeking to develop students' metacognition may wish to shrink the focus and begin with one or two initial strategies, waiting until these are fully embedded, and only then moving on to others intended to foster metacognitive thinking

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Sustain your world.

The question of whether to change the six-week summer holiday comes round seemingly every year – but the after-effects of the pandemic have given those discussions a new sense of urgency...

Melissa Benn

When I was young I loved those early September days when I'd return to school, full of enthusiasm and toting a bag packed with empty lined notebooks and freshly sharpened pencils.

The long summer holidays made every autumn term feel like a fresh start, giving me a chance to present myself in a new light. Well, for a few weeks, at least…

That six-week break still feels like a luxury, even though we in the UK have one of the shorter summer holidays in Europe. Italian pupils have 13 weeks off. In Estonia – home to one of the world's most rapidly improving education systems – students have three months off over the summer.

However, the continuing problems presented by the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students has made some educators look again at the current length of the summer holiday.

A quick fix?

In June 2022, the Welsh government announced that it was considering cutting the summer break by up to two weeks – in part to boost the achievement of poorer pupils, whose learning often suffers during extended absences from school.

The slower progress of poorer pupils was made much worse by COVID. The pandemic has led to the widest results gap between better-off and poorer students (both at the end of primary school and at KS4) for over 10 years.

According to Sir Peter Lampl, the influential founder of the Sutton Trust, the long break of the pandemic "Has reversed a decade of progress" and paints a "worrying picture" (see bit.ly/ts126-MB1).

On the face of it, a shorter summer holiday might be a potential quick fix solution. I can well remember a talented humanities teacher at our local secondary explaining to me one of the key reasons he was quitting state school teaching. As he wearily told me, "*I just can't go on watching all the progress I've made by late July with some of my brilliant, less advantaged students completely evaporate by September.*"

Right answers, wrong places

Summer holidays may also be more emotionally challenging for poorer pupils than their affluent peers, especially amid the cost of living crisis. For many teenagers, there's little to do but hang about. There's no money for trips or treats, let alone the chance to go on long foreign holidays full of cultural interest.

How might a shorter summer break serve teachers? Some would argue that a shorter summer break could be used to extend the Easter and winter breaks, thus giving teachers more time to plan lessons throughout the year.

Then again, are we looking for the right answers in the wrong places? When the Welsh government first announced its plan to shorten the summer holidays, the director of ASCL Cymru was moved to remark that there were many more pressing issues to deal with, such as ongoing teacher shortages.

In a post-COVID review of evidence regarding school absences, the Education Endowment Foundation found that the most effective way of boosting student attainment wasn't through the provision of summer schools, but via small group tuition and high quality feedback (see bit.ly/ts126-MB2).

At the same time, the EEF pointed out that given how hard it is to attract and retain disadvantaged students to summer school programmes, putting on additional lessons over the summer risked provoking teacher burnout.

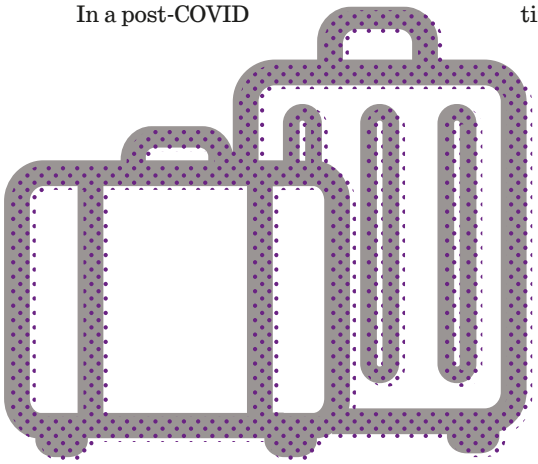
Endangered species

The Welsh government is still consulting on its school holiday proposals at the time of writing, but any major changes seem likely to be met with stiff resistance.

Looked at from a different angle, why should it be up to schools to think of how to engage children and young people with few family resources throughout the long summer holidays? Whatever happened to youth clubs – those places where teenagers would once gather under the supervision of trained youth workers? Thanks to savage LA budget cuts over a number of years, youth workers have effectively become an endangered species.

If we're talking about teens spending time in school over summer, it seems more rational to dedicate time and resources to the task of recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and cutting class sizes. Not shrink down the one holiday that gives everyone a genuine break from the year-round pressure.

Rest is essential if humans are to flourish – something that applies equally to both learners and teachers alike. Our education system should ultimately look to other, more genuinely effective ways of supporting those who are struggling academically.



Melissa Benn (@Melissa_Benn) is the author of *Life Lessons: The Case for a National Education Service*, and is a visiting professor at York St John university

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3 things we've learnt about ... WHAT SUMMER BREAKS ARE *REALLY* LIKE

It's the part of being a teacher that profession outsiders envy the most – but what do teachers' six-week summer holidays actually entail in practice?

1 Six weeks of 'non-student time'

At Teacher Tapp, we've been asking what teachers are getting up to in their summers. Yes, many will indeed have taken the opportunity for a well-deserved break – but there will have been many days and weeks where school work has occupied their minds.

Almost three-quarters of teachers report doing 'at least some' marking, lesson or curriculum planning over the summer, with more than 7 in 10 confirming they have been into school at least once. Among this group, most are going in just a handful of times (results day aside), but 8% of secondary teachers have been in four times or more to prepare their classroom for the new school year.

Other common activities that teachers do over the summer include buying classroom resources (27%, most commonly among the least experienced teachers) and making resources at home (26%).

2 Anxiety-inducing email notifications

In an increasingly connected society, it can be difficult to completely switch off and not think about work. More than 70% of teachers have access to their work emails via their personal phones, making it much more likely for notifications to disrupt their summer break.

Some teachers put on an out-of-office reply, but this isn't actually all that common, with just 1 in 5 doing so. Around 40% of teachers told us that they simply ignore their inbox for the most part, but the lure of instant email is evidently hard to resist. 61% of classroom teachers reported replying to at least one work email, while virtually all headteachers and SLT staff had done so. And these aren't just administrative emails – 20% of secondary teachers said they had received an email that caused them stress or unhappiness over the summer.

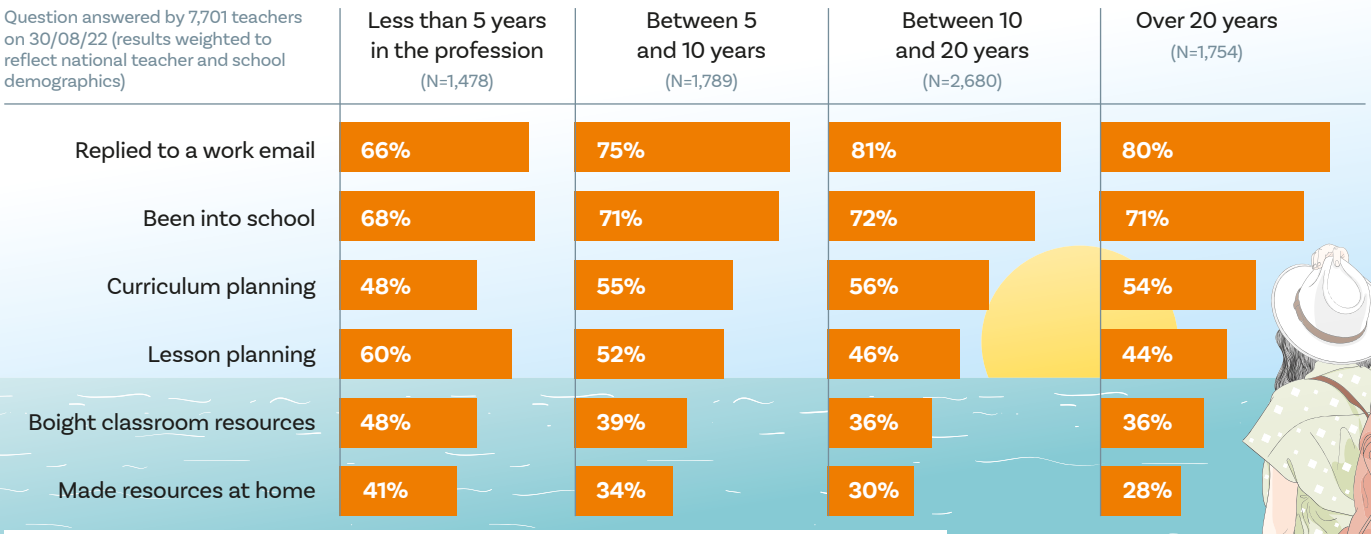
3 Some degree of relaxation too!

That said, many teachers do still find time to take a well-deserved break. Three-quarters of teachers say they manage to go away on a summer holiday, with half of this group making it abroad. Following several years of pandemic-related disruption, the teacher holiday scene in 2023 is looking much more as you'd expect.

Self-catering accommodation remains the preferred option for most when going away, particularly among those with families in tow, with hotels a close second. Nearly 1 in 5 teachers report taking the far less predictable approach of camping, despite the vagaries of British weather...

Finally, the break also presents opportunities for teachers to pick up hobbies that may have taken a back seat during term-time. More than half report embarking on a DIY project to keep them out of trouble, while an impressive 10% undertake volunteer work – as if teaching wasn't enough...

WHAT ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU DONE ON YOUR SUMMER HOLIDAY?



For more snappy insights like this, and to be part of the panel, please join in via the free Teacher Tapp app available to download for iOS and Android. You will learn something new every day.

CLASSROOM LIFE

An eye on CPD

Recording lessons for CPD purposes isn't new, but the control over the process granted to teachers at **Aston University Engineering Academy** warrants closer attention...

Isn't it time to reassess traditional lesson observations and ask ourselves if they are actually improving learning for pupils and teachers?

A quick search on any social platform will reveal how plenty of things can go wrong with them – from banal accidents, like coffee spills and malfunctioning IT, to unpredictable student behaviour and teachers forgetting everyone's name (and sometimes even their own).

All frivolity aside, lesson observations can sometimes make even the most experienced teachers break into a sweat upon hearing the words, '*Please ignore me, I'm not here. I'm just observing.*"

And that's wrong, isn't it? At a time when teacher retention and recruitment stories are hitting the headlines for all the wrong reasons, stressed, unhappy teachers are the last thing that any school will want for their pupils. The time has come to inject some fresh thinking into how we approach lesson observations.

Support, not scrutiny

Understanding what works well and what doesn't in lessons, and the impact of this on pupils' learning, is pivotal to school improvement. And yet, an isolated lesson observation can only ever provide a snapshot of what's happening on a certain day at a certain time. As such, they can't really reflect the reality of the teacher or pupils' day to day experiences and interactions in the classroom.

"GIVING TEACHERS MORE INDEPENDENCE IN THE CLASSROOM, AND SHIFTING OUR CPD FOCUS MORE TOWARDS LEARNING THAN TEACHING, HAS HELPED THEM BETTER IDENTIFY AND UNPICK WHAT'S WORKING FOR THEM IN CLASS, FOR WHOM AND WHY. THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FINE TUNE THEIR TEACHING, WHICH HAS IN TURN MADE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT."

DAVID CHAPMAN, HEAD OF SCHOOL AT ASTON UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING ACADEMY

If the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results, is it fair to carry out infrequent assessments of our teachers, as if they do the same thing, in the same way every lesson? No, because they don't, and neither do their pupils.

Classrooms are highly dynamic environments. No two days or lessons will ever be the same, since there are simply too many variables at play. At the same time, we all know that teaching is already a challenging profession. Observations can up the ante even further, leaving teachers feeling simultaneously unsupported, over-scrutinised and undervalued.

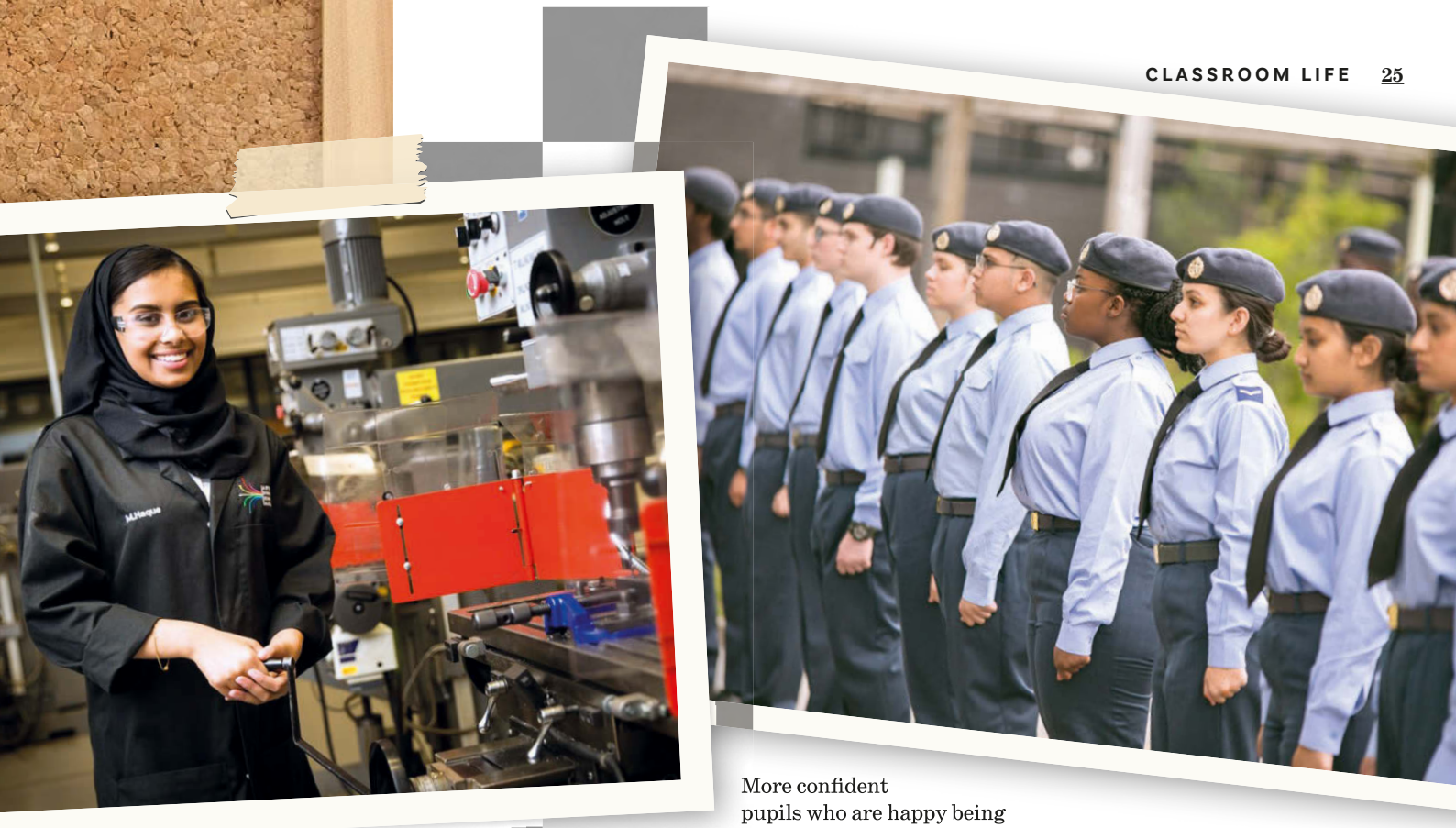
All that said, however, lesson observations remain an important tool within the larger teacher CPD toolkit. That's why we wanted to find out if they could be carried out more frequently, less formally and less intrusively.

Giving teachers agency

We wanted to give our teachers more independence to reflect on how their lessons went, and greater agency over the areas they wanted to work on. It may be, for instance, that one colleague wanted to understand why one of their lessons was working well for one set of pupils, but not for a different class.

In practical terms, of course, setting aside the time and space to do this can be quite the ask for teachers already grappling with heavy workloads. We therefore opted to explore whether giving teachers a 360° view of the classroom could help them spot things they might have otherwise missed.

In consultation with staff, we took the decision to implement classroom camera technology from ONVU Learning. Importantly, however, we put teachers in control of the recording facilities, so that they get to decide when to press record, and whether they wish to review the



resulting footage by themselves, or in the presence of a colleague who can offer further advice.

This new ability to pause and rewind events from within a lesson has allowed our teachers to identify things otherwise easily missed in the moment. For example, we had one teacher spot a pupil sitting at the back of the class not engaging in the lesson after reviewing the footage. Because the pupil hadn't been disruptive. this would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

As it was, the teacher was able to check with the boy and discovered that he had previously covered the same topic at a different school. She was then able to adapt the lesson to involve him more and keep him engaged.

In another case, we had a teacher who had been struggling to manage a particular group of Y10 boys. After watching a playback of the classroom footage alongside a colleague, the teacher was able to take on board some of the colleague's suggestions for tweaks to the lesson's order of play, and things improved thereafter.

Teachers learn best from other teachers – especially when they have experienced the same issues, with the same cohort of pupils in the same school. It can feel far less isolating once someone can see what's actually happening and then talk through the issues raised.

A change of perspective

Hands up anyone whose classes are populated with several members of the 'hands up faithful'...? Hands up anyone teaching pupils who are clever, yet always silent...? Do we have any classes with their fair share of 'star turns?'

As we know, a willingness to raise one's hand isn't necessarily the best indicator of engagement and understanding. Some children may well know the answers, but be reluctant to come forward for fear of being seen as 'too smart.'

More confident pupils who are happy being the centre of attention might jump in without thinking through the answer properly.

The educationalist John Dewey once emphasised the importance of seeing education as a single process involving teaching and learning, with no separation between the two. A theory arguably since proven – but if teaching is only part of learning process, does it not make sense for observations to focus more on what *impact* the lesson is having on pupils?

> **"Teachers learn best from other teachers – especially when they have experienced the same issues"**

A more positive approach

That's why we've encouraged our teachers to assess how well pupils are engaging during lessons by identifying 'small giveaways' – assorted little tells, such as a student's body language, or where their eyes happen to be tracking.

Small outward signs like these can reflect how invested students are in the lesson, or help identify what effects those pupils taking longer to settle are having on their peers.

By observing what impact a lesson *is* having on pupils, rather than the impact we *assume* it's having, teachers can make small, yet critical improvements to their practice.

For instance, one of our maths teachers was disappointed to see that some pupils hadn't grasped a complex maths problem after they handed in their homework. She'd thought everyone had understood how she explained it, but after reviewing the lesson footage could see for herself where she'd lost some pupils along the way. She was able to then fine-tune her lesson so that no pupil was left behind.

With teachers now having more ownership over the decisions they take in the classroom, they can feel more valued, more respected and more willing to share not just their strengths, but also details of what they could have done differently to improve the lesson. This has helped develop the knowledge and learning of their colleagues, as well as themselves.

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WHAT I LEARNT AT SCHOOL

Dermot O'Leary looks back on the useful protection afforded by an older sibling, and that special moment when a teacher wants to know what *you* think...

What can you remember about your transition from primary to secondary school?

That final year of primary school is such a wonderful time in childhood. You're the biggest kids there, and get given a bit more responsibility while you gear up for this big move. At such a young age, that can feel really empowering. Then you get to secondary, and suddenly there are these *massive* fifth year boys, with testosterone coursing through their veins...

I went to quite an unusual Catholic secondary school, in that the Catholic dimension seemed to be more about being socially aware than following doctrine. It wasn't an especially 'good' school in terms of its academic results – though it is now – but thanks to its humanities department, you did leave with a real sense of 'the World' and a curiosity to learn more about it.

It was a pretty nice school in general, so there wasn't much bullying going on – not that a 15- or 16-year-old is realistically going to beat up an 11-year-old – but you're still there at the start, thinking '*I am* ***no one*** *at this school...*'

That said, I was lucky in that I had a sister in the fourth year, which felt a bit like being in the Mafia. She was popular and hung out with some quite hard Teddy Boys, so for a while at least, if anyone had wanted to beat me up, I was quite well 'protected'...

Do you have any particularly fond memories of secondary school?

You start when you're 11, as a child, and finish as a young adult – and *so much* changes in that time. Some of the people I was there with I still remember really fondly, having not seen them since the day I left; I'd love to see some of them again.

Generally, we were a pretty nice, collegiate bunch. The school didn't have too many wrong 'uns. It wasn't a particularly big school, either – maybe 800 or so pupils, small for the local area – which meant everyone pretty much knew everyone.

One of my oldest friends is someone I met on the second day of starting there. It was a case of mistaken identity – I thought he was another kid in my form, but he just went along with it. I then saw him the next day, with that other guy, we introduced ourselves properly and soon became really tight. We've since been Best Men for each other, are godparents to each other's kids and still speak weekly.

Can you recall any teachers who particularly inspired you?

There were some great teachers at school, including my old drama teacher who I still see now and is a lovely man. There was also an RE teacher who was a real firebrand – parts of the school ended up being named after him after he passed away at a fairly young age.

I didn't do too well at school academically, largely because I wasn't focused enough. I went on to attend the local Sixth Form College, and learnt from great teachers there who taught me in English, politics and media studies, and were key in giving me that focus I'd lacked.

I think I only really 'found myself' academically at 16. Those years at Sixth Form were a lovely combination of being taught well, and being encouraged to think independently. I found A Levels to be perhaps the most exciting, but also hardest period I spent in education.

You're a young adult, and it's the first time you hear '*Okay, I'm teaching you this – but what do* ***you*** *think about it?*' Your morals are usually pretty set by then, but now you have to articulate them because someone wants to know your opinion.

My parents were amazing. They were always teaching me to be curious and to develop a love for learning – but having someone outside my family wanting to hear what *I* think about politics? The memory of feeling that level of empowerment has really stayed with me.

Dermot O'Leary latest book for children, *Wings of Glory*, illustrated by Claire Powell, is due to be published on 14th September 2023 (£12.99 HB, Hachette Children's)

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The TS guide to ...
Assessment

This issue, we look at how to keep those pressing assessment demands under control...

IN THIS SECTION

IN FIGURES:

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE FORMALLY ASSESSED AT THE RIGHT AGE – AND IS TOO MUCH TIME BEING SPENT ON ASSESSMENT?

77%
of UK adults believe 16 is 'about the right age' for people to sit exams for their first formal qualifications
Source: YouGov

53%
Of respondents to the 2022 'Working lives of teachers and leaders' survey reported spending 'too much' time on data recording, input and analysis tasks
Source: DfE

48%
of teachers in England and Wales view their workloads as 'unmanageable', to one degree or another
Source: State of Education survey conducted by the NEU

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

4 QUICK ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
Check that you're teaching the right content at the appropriate time with Claire Gadsby's quick ideas to assess prior knowledge
bit.ly/126special1

RIGOUR WITHOUT THE BURDEN
Finding out what our students know at any point in time should be a rigorous process – but not, insists Mark Lehain, a burdensome one...
bit.ly/126special2

CAN ASSESSMENT BE USED TO MOTIVATE?
Harry Fletcher-Wood discusses how behavioural science has the potential to help students get more out of the assessment process
bit.ly/126special3

How are we doing...?

Ongoing school assessment is vital for keeping outcomes on track – but ensuring colleagues know what 'on track' actually looks like isn't always easy, observes **Daniel Harvey**...

Around 11 years ago, I remember taking part in several CPD/INSET events focused on how to show Ofsted that 'rapid progress was being made in 20 minutes'. Some of this work was being led by teachers and school leaders who I very much respected – but the fact remains that this training actually happened.

Interestingly, what was presented to us was duly implemented in an inspection that followed later that year. The inspectors evidently lapped this work up, since the school went on to achieve a Good rating.

During an another, later inspection, I can remember presenting to a different set inspectors, alongside some senior colleagues, reams of hastily prepared spreadsheet data that used National Curriculum levels to show how clear and obvious progress was being made at KS3. Once again, this approach helped us to achieve a successful outcome.

Evidence-informed strategies

I present those opening paragraphs to paint a picture of what now seems like a different time in the English education system. Thankfully, due to the work of many teachers, school leaders and educationalists, the kind of thinking that saw us prosper then has since been replaced by more principled, evidence-informed strategies.

Particularly notable at the time was subsequent work by the likes of Rob Coe, Mary Wyatt, Mike Cladingbowl and Sean Harford, which succeeded in changing the conversation, and in turn the broader focus of school development and Ofsted's inspection framework.

I don't want to use this article to bash Ofsted, but I'm glad that the practice observed back then of grading lessons – and therefore teachers, in some schools – has long fallen out of favour. Since it's worth remembering the role school assessment processes sometimes played in assisting this work, what I'd like to do here is set out what principled assessment in a school *ought* to look like, and what it should be used to achieve.

> **"A school's investment in its curriculum will be undone unless the planned assessment is sympathetic to the needs of both students and teachers"**

Amanda Spielman's time as Ofsted's HMCI has coincided with a major, perhaps even revolutionary change in the focus of the inspection framework. A school's investment in the quality of the curriculum it provides is now considered to be of paramount importance – though what Ofsted now describes as a school's '*curriculum intent*', '*implementation*' and '*impact*', I've always taken to respectively mean 'the planned curriculum', 'the taught curriculum' and 'the learned curriculum'.

Well planned, accurate and reliable assessment can and should inform all three of these areas. For example, the planned curriculum should include details about student misconceptions and how best to address these.

Ongoing school assessment also needs to take into account that learning is now seen as what's remembered over time, rather than a change in long-term memory – a definition first offered by Sweller *et al* in 2011.

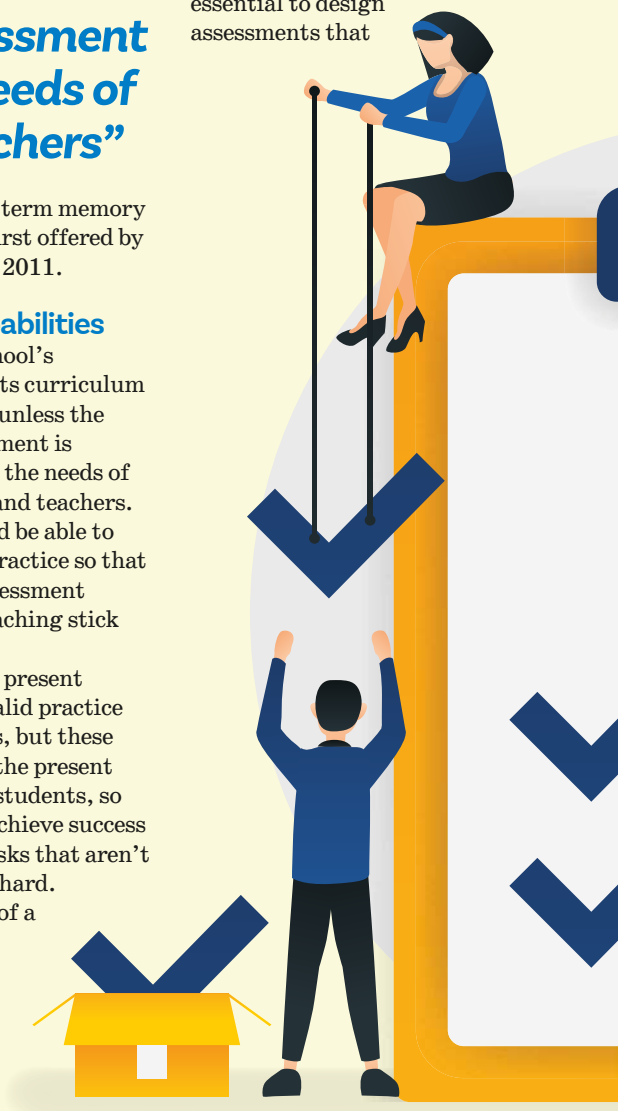
Present capabilities

That said, a school's investment in its curriculum will be undone unless the planned assessment is sympathetic to the needs of both students and teachers. Teachers should be able to develop their practice so that their use of assessment makes their teaching stick over time.

Teachers can present accurate and valid practice tasks in lessons, but these need to match the present capabilities of students, so that they can achieve success when facing tasks that aren't too easy or too hard.

The bedrock of a school's assessment approach should involve incrementally increasing the demands of practice to the required standard – i.e. the standards set out in the planned curriculum – and then providing accurate feedback to enable student success.

Teachers also need to be clear about about the difference between assessment *at* the point of learning and assessment *from* the point of learning. Teaching should reflect the demands of both assessment forms, which means it's essential to design assessments that



are equally effective in different situations. This needs to be a regular focus for schools, with specific subject teams taking time to consider the efficacy of the assessments they use.

Questions worth asking

All this leaves schools with a set of questions that they need to be able to answer in detail:

- What is the purpose of assessment in this school? How does it serve students, teachers and the wider school community?
- Who will benefit from this assessment process, and in what ways?
- How can success be modelled for the students, in a way that prompts them into preparing effectively prior to their taking of the assessments in question?

As well as paying heed to these considerations, staff will benefit greatly from clarity around when assessments will take place, and how the school's leadership intends to check whether different subjects sufficiently reflect the rigour and standards of the planned curriculum.

At the same time, think about how assessment can be used to check the quality of the planned/taught curriculum itself, and make sure staff are aware of the inferences that will be made from the assessment data they submit at a student/class/year group/subject level. Is everyone aware of how you intend to record and report your assessment data?

Responding to these questions will enable schools to be very clear about what they're doing when they're asked about it, and why they do what they do.

The art of justifying

30 years into my teaching career, I now recognise that getting assessment right is one of the most important and challenging domains for a school leader.

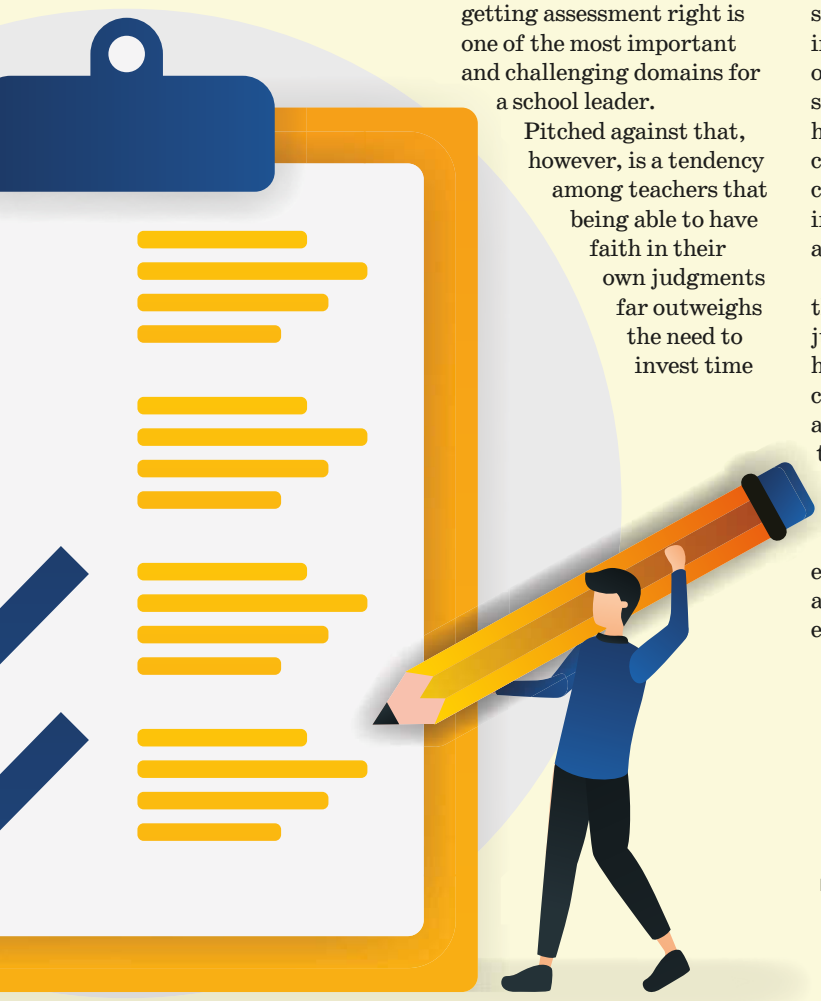
Pitched against that, however, is a tendency among teachers that being able to have faith in their own judgments far outweighs the need to invest time in reviewing and uncovering evidence on whether their school-wide and classroom-based assessments are sufficiently effective.

I've personally become wary of extrapolating particular judgments from a test, exam or assessment score. That's why I'm glad many new NPQ courses include specific sections on assessment, so that teachers can develop a more nuanced understanding of the educational domain via examination of key evidence studies.

In time, this will hopefully result in a more discerning and evidence-informed approach – from both school leaders and middle leaders – to embedding effective assessment strategies which work for the benefit of students, teachers and the school more generally.

The ability to justify the reasons behind certain assessment design and implementation decisions can be hugely beneficial for school leaders come inspection time. A key means of getting there would be for school staff to be used to having internal conversations around the choices and decisions made in curriculum and assessment design.

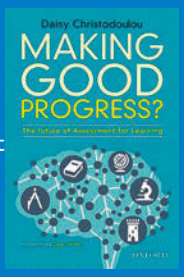
Accurately capturing these decisions and justifications at the time can help leaders and teachers craft more coherent and articulate arguments when they later come to share the vision they have for the school – whilst also showing precisely how existing curriculum plans are being fully and effectively implemented.



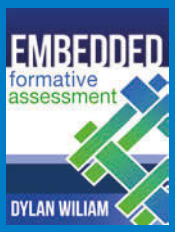
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture at an inner city academy

RECOMMENDED READING

If you're in the process of trying to encourage more evidence-informed discussion within your leadership and subject teams, I would recommend the following ...



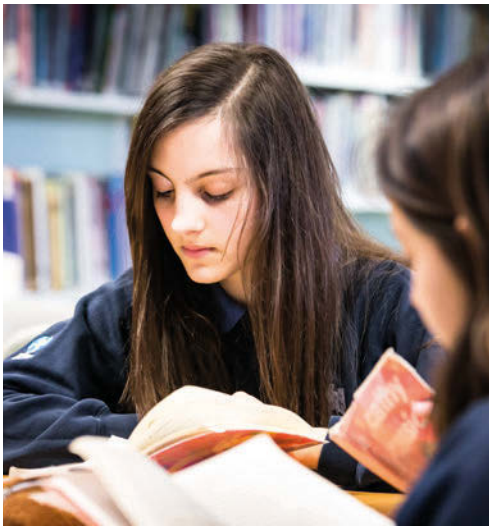
MAKING GOOD PROGRESS? BY DAISY CHRISTODOULOU
This book sets out how an evidence-informed approach can be used to generate recommendations for class teachers and subject teachers to implement, to achieve a coherent and effective use of assessment in classrooms.



EMBEDDED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT BY DYLAN WILIAM
Dylan Wiliam is singularly the very best educational speaker I have ever had the privilege of listening to. He has written widely on assessment (among many other educational topics) and for many, remains one of the leading experts in the field. This book and its related materials examines how schools can develop teachers and their teaching to accurately embed formative assessment to students' benefit.

'IMPROVING EDUCATION' LECTURE
This 2013 lecture delivered by Rob Cole is particularly notable for a compelling section that highlights poor proxies for learning.

bit.ly/ts126-oa1



ASK THE EXPERT

"It is a crucial assessment"

GL Assessment's Georgina Cook explains why the New Group Reading Test should be part of every school's assessment toolkit

What is the New Group Reading Test (NGRT)?

NGRT is an adaptive, standardised, termly reading test for children aged 6 to 16. As a group screener, it helps to identify, track and monitor the reading skills of all students, ensuring that the right steps are always taken to support progress. The adaptive nature of the test – which means that the questions change according to the learner's reading abilities – allows a teacher to quickly spot those students who might require an intervention.

What information does it give you about your learners?

NGRT provides teachers with information on their students' word reading and comprehension. The most important piece of information is the Standard Age Score (SAS). Based on the number of questions a student has answered correctly, the SAS makes a comparison with a nationally representative sample of UK-based students of exactly the same age. This means that teachers can quickly see which students are reading above, or in line with age-related expectations, and which students are struggling.

How can it help you to support reluctant and struggling readers?

We know how important it is for students who haven't mastered grapheme-phoneme correspondences by the age of 6 to catch up, so they can become confident learners. NGRT provides schools with easy-to-understand overviews. Our group ranking helps teachers to identify those most in need of additional support, while our individual student reports provide an overview of the results achieved, alongside tailored, practical and useful classroom suggestions to help ensure progress is made.

EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Georgina Cook

JOB TITLE:
Assessment Specialist, and formerly a MAT English/literacy lead

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Language and literacy

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Supporting teachers understand how assessment makes a difference to a child's future

How can it help provide support for learners at transition to secondary school?

It's vital for secondary schools to understand the reading abilities of their Y7 children as quickly as possible. The demands of KS3 means a young learner will be taught by multiple subject teachers, all of whom will expect their students to read and understand texts that use subject-specific language. Standardised reading tests like NGRT are a first step for schools towards identifying learners who have gaps in their knowledge and need to catch up.

How can it support leaders in their evaluation of reading strategy?

NGRT ensures struggling readers aren't missed, capable readers are stretched and confident readers are offered a wider choice of materials. It is a crucial assessment that headteachers and reading leads can trust to ensure resources aren't being wasted, and that interventions are appropriately targeted. The nuanced data allows leaders to profile students' needs, keep data simplified for staff, and make sure that the support available is timely, clear and purposeful.

ASK ME ABOUT

- **READING PATHWAYS: How to use reading assessment data to pinpoint learners' reading needs**
- **TARGETED INTERVENTIONS: How to identify and support students to help them better engage with all of their lessons**
- **DEVELOPING A WHOLE SCHOOL READING STRATEGY: How to analyse your data to create a reading programme that benefits all students**

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Exams and EAL

EAL students can have a hard enough time at KS3, but what can teachers do to prepare them ahead of their GCSEs? **Caroline Scott** shares her thoughts...

Every day in secondary schools, subject teachers are faced with the daunting task of supporting EAL learners with both the academic language they need to pass exams, and the linguistic knowledge they need to articulate their understanding.

Subject teachers can feel underskilled in supporting these learners' linguistic requirements, and will therefore – understandably – focus more on the building blocks of the content, such as topic words or answers to concepts. So how can subject teachers do more to support EAL learners with both the course content and the linguistic side of their learning?

Let's consider some simple strategies for addressing learners' linguistic requirements when teaching academic content:

1. Use home language to support understanding

Intermediate learners will often find new concepts difficult because they don't understand enough of the topic. If, however, a learner can research a topic in their own language, it will put them in a better position to understand related concepts by making connections between their own language and English.

2. Pre-teach model answers prior to exams

Review a number of exam questions together over a series of lessons, and then co-construct short model answers using accessible vocabulary. Co-construction is a powerful way of modelling what an exam answer might require, which can also help with identifying key language structures and specific technical vocabulary.

Come up with some prototype answers using structures the exam questions may call for. For example, one question might ask the student to 'explain', 'report' or 'argue'. Each of these has its own language structures which need to be within the learner's repertoire of potential responses – so it follows that if learners can identify which text type the question requires, the associated structures will help them write their answer.

3. Use substitution tables

Substitution tables provide useful frames for supporting the understanding of potentially complex text. They can not only generate the answer needed to fulfil a question's requirements, but also help learners easily construct multiple sentences/answers by showing how to exchange key vocabulary.

If, for instance, a sample question requires learners to identify different types of beliefs, a simple substitution table can help frame the answer, as shown in fig 1.

4. Provide academic vocabulary lists with translations

If there are too many new words in a text, a learner is unlikely to understand it. Providing academic vocabulary lists with translations can be very supportive, especially if issued in advance, so that learners have time to digest what's about to be taught to them.

In an ideal world, the number of new vocabulary items a learner is introduced to may be fairly low (say, 10 to 12 words), but these will then be repeated over days and applied in different ways. Yet teachers and learners often lack the luxury of time to introduce vocabulary in small chunks slowly – or, indeed, repeat it strategically in many different ways..

5. Repetition and feedback

Once a learner has begun to construct their own answers to exam questions, try to work with them one-to-one in order to generate feedback on the linguistic construction of their answers and the content. Revise this together and rewrite it. Then remove all previously provided models and ask the student to complete their answer again – only this time, completely unaided.

This process of building a model, having a go, revising together and then removing models can be extremely powerful!

EAL learners already face the hard task of entering into an English-medium education with limited English proficiency. It's our responsibility as teachers to do what we can to scaffold English as a language, so that as learners, they can successfully develop the language they'll need to effectively articulate meaning in exams.

fig 1.

Some Many	people individuals	hold believe feel	the	View	that	...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Scott is the founder of Across Cultures, creator of the Learning Village programme and an EAL teacher trainer, having previously worked in schools across the world, developing English language skills for young learners; for more information, visit axcultures.com or follow @eal_teaching

Readers can download a resource to accompany this article, 'Helpful language for learning English in Science', via **bit.ly/ts126-EAL**

A digital future?

The future of school assessment is clearly going to be fully-digital, reasons **Anthony David** – so let's make sure we realise all the attendant advantages...

Education has spent a considerable amount of time in the spotlight over recent months. Not so much because of what students are learning, but more with respect to teacher workload and related questions of why we're doing what we're doing.

Alongside this has been the burgeoning popularity of artificial intelligence programs (ChatGPT, Bard, Microsoft Co-Pilot, to name but three), and while few believe these can solve all our workload issues in the short term, they have at least prompted us to think about how we could be using our existing IT set ups in better and more effective ways.

Related to that has been a steadily growing transformation in how schools approach their management information systems. SIMS has dominated this space for decades, with over 90% of schools using the company's offerings at one point. More recently, however, it has been arguably dethroned by more nimble, cloud-based competitors such as BromComm, ScholarPack and Arbor – the latter of which is now the MIS of choice for a third of schools across the country.

The change has been rapid – so could this new breed of information systems support our assessment of learning via more smarter and more efficient means?

Online assessment

Of course, digital assessment is hardly a new concept. Companies such as O-Tracker, Pupil Tracker, Target Tracker (and indeed many other products and services with the word 'tracker' in their name) have been around for at least a couple of decades, and the manner in which they're used has remained largely the same over that time – students complete work, teachers input data, leaders analyse the results.

Yet this process, whilst well-intentioned, is broken in that it's *linear*, rather than *cyclical*. Any assessment must inform students' learning, and there's an ever-present risk that the cycle won't complete. So what role can computers play in strengthening this process?

Well, if secondary schools transition their assignments and assessments to an online format, they can significantly streamline their submission and grading procedures. As many readers will know, learning management systems (LMS) enable teachers to upload assignments and make them accessible to students remotely – one positive development of the pandemic being the accelerated adoption of such systems by schools nationwide.

In 2023, Microsoft Teams effectively dominates the secondary LMS space, while Google Workspace does the same for primaries. One key advantage of the LMS model is that students can submit their work digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents entirely and thus reducing the risk of anything untoward (loss, damage) happening to students' completed work.

The more far-reaching benefits of online assessments include the ability to monitor progress, track student performance and identify trends across classes and cohorts much more easily. Digital submissions additionally allow teachers to deploy electronic plagiarism detection tools to maintain academic integrity.

> ***"I was previously wary of peer assessment – but when fused with technology, it's a whole other matter"***

When working at optimal capacity, a modern LMS can perform tasks older trackers never could, simultanously providing school-wide information for leaders and granular support for students.

Formative assessment

The key word there, however, is 'optimal'. Attaining that requires a certain degree of training and IT literacy, and also entails a deep review of a school's curriculum. There can be little doubt that a well-configured LMS is the future where schools' assessment duties are concerned, but it's arguably not here quite yet. We'll see all higher education centres completing the transition soon enough – but if my 16-year old-son's books are anything to go by, the handwritten word is still reigning supreme.

Formative assessments play a crucial role in gauging students' understanding of concepts and identifying those areas requiring further attention. To that end, most LMS solutions will provide a suite of formative assessment tools catering to different learning styles and preferences. Interactive quizzes, polls, and games can keep students engaged, while at the same time providing

teachers with genuine real-time insights into student comprehension.

Formative assessment tools further allow for ongoing evaluation, reducing the pressures involved with traditional end-of-term examinations. More importantly, this evaluation can be dynamic and produced in real time.

What I find interesting is how integrating an LMS into a MIS such as Arbor enables individual assessments to form part of a wider pastoral picture. Such is the power of digital systems – they can gather and process information from a wide set of data points in ways that would otherwise be impossible. For now, this approach is still largely the preserve of 'superuser' schools, but will inevitably become more widespread over the coming years as good practice is shared more widely.

Peer assessment

The area where this technological power can be most readily seen is with peer assessment. I myself have previously been wary of peer assessment, but when fused with technology it's a whole other matter.

Through tech-facilitated peer assessment and collaborative learning, students can evaluate each other's work and provide constructive feedback in ways that would never have previously been viable. Peer assessment can lighten a teacher's marking load, of course, but will also nurture a sense of responsibility and accountability among students as they engage more actively in the learning process.

Collaboration tools, such as Google Workspace, enable students to work together on group projects, facilitating effective communication and teamwork. Such activities will help students develop essential interpersonal skills, while at the same time showcasing their collective knowledge and abilities – in effect, genuinely preparing students for the modern workplace.

I can recall once observing two students sat at opposite sides of the classroom, both working on the same website project. They could have easily been in different rooms, buildings or even countries – it didn't matter, and wouldn't have hindered their communication. That's quite the change.

21st century collaboration

Formative assessment tools allow for ongoing evaluation, while online assessments let us carry out more comprehensive assessments of students' skills.

To that, we can now add peer assessment and collaboration tools that empower students to take charge of their learning and develop vital 21st century skills. I frequently work on Google docs with colleagues situated miles away from me, and expect most readers can say the same.

By smartly utilising tech-driven assessment methods, schools can create more efficient, engaging, and interactive educational environments – ones capable of fostering holistic growth and preparing students for success in the ever-evolving wider digital landscape.

Some parts of this picture still have some way to go; others are firmly here, but perhaps need more intentional planning to get the best out of them. What's certain, however, is that how we assess can save time.

With the developers of modern MIS solutions doubtless keen to use teacher-inputted data for the purposes of training AI, we may well find ourselves moving from a position of interrogating our data to questioning it. And increasingly, it's those questions we ask that are key to improving outcomes, not necessarily the data itself.

IN BRIEF

- Automated marking systems can save teachers time and provide immediate feedback on objective assessments.
- Incorporating online assignments into digital classrooms such as Microsoft Teams or Google Workspace can significantly streamline your submission and marking processes
- Formative assessment tools can be used to engage students while enabling ongoing evaluation, thus producing valuable learning data outside of traditional, exam-style assessments
- Peer assessment and collaboration tools develop critical thinking and interpersonal skills.
- Embracing technology-driven assessment helps to create more richly interactive educational environments that can better prepare students for success in a technology-driven world

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Anthony David is an executive headteacher

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CLASSROOM VOICES

"It takes just one disruptive student to derail a lesson"

Gloria Dalafu explains how the FAIR framework can neutralise the difficult challenges presented by disruptive pupils

Imagine walking into a classroom full of students all sitting silently with their books and pens on the table. As the lesson gets underway, several hands rise whenever you ask a question. The students are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They seem genuinely interested.

In this fantasy world, teachers are also paid in gold coins, have no need to work at home, and never have to deal with students challenging their authority.

MINIMAL TRAINING

Good behaviour management skills are crucial for keeping students focused on learning. And yet, my own PGCE provided minimal training for this critical area of practice.

Like most teachers, I experienced a period of stress early in my career that prompted me to plot an escape from teaching. My initial enthusiasm for the job had faded fast as a direct result of disruptive behaviours I was struggling to manage.

What prevented me from quitting was the realisation that *most students want to learn*. Disruptive students constitute a tiny minority, yet it takes just one disruptive student to completely derail an entire lesson. Recognising this made me determined to develop the skills necessary to deal with such students appropriately.

IMPLICIT MESSAGES

The breakthrough came for me when I discovered the **Functional Hypothesis**, **Accommodation**, **Interaction** and **Response** (FAIR) framework developed by Harvard professors N. Rappaport and J. Minahan (2012).

What makes the FAIR framework unique is the way it draws on both clinical research and best practice to show teachers how to effectively manage disruptive students.

To take each in turn, the 'Functional hypothesis' posits that every behaviour displayed by a student is communicating something to you, the teacher – and that it's your responsibility to decode those implicit messages.

I've observed this in my own practice by listening carefully to students, actively attempting to understand their requirements and then offering support that addresses those specific needs.

If, for example, a student is struggling to complete a task within the allotted time, it could either mean that the task is too challenging for them to complete, or that they didn't understand the explanation provided. In any case, the first step would be to talk to the student (rather than assume they're simply refusing to complete the task) before then offering support based on what the student tells you.

ADVANCE PLANNING

'Accommodation' is an approach that seeks to counter disruptive behaviour by planning responses in advance. This requires teachers to structure the learning environment to take into account what they know of students' individual habits, traits and characteristics.

If, say, a student lacks the ability to concentrate for sustained periods, one way of preventing subsequent disruption would be to break down lessons into 15-minute chunks with brief rests in between.

'Interaction strategies' are intended to build relationships between teachers and students. Even something as simple as acknowledging students' birthdays can build an important sense of connection. As noted by Patterson (2009), greeting students when they arrive at start of the lesson can reduce the likelihood of disruptions later on.

TIME AND PRACTICE

Finally, a 'Response' strategy recognises that while students and teachers are responsible for their own behaviour, students are in school to learn – which makes it your responsibility, as their teacher, to pass on strategies they can use for self-regulating their behaviour.

Key to this is understanding that a student's disruptive behaviour might not be happening out of spite, but rather ignorance of how to respond to an unfamiliar situation.

Like any skill, honing your behaviour management techniques takes time and practice – but once mastered, your experience of teaching will become far more enjoyable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Dalafu is a lead practitioner in maths, overseeing teaching and learning, teacher with 17 years' experience. For more information, visit positiveclassroomculture.com

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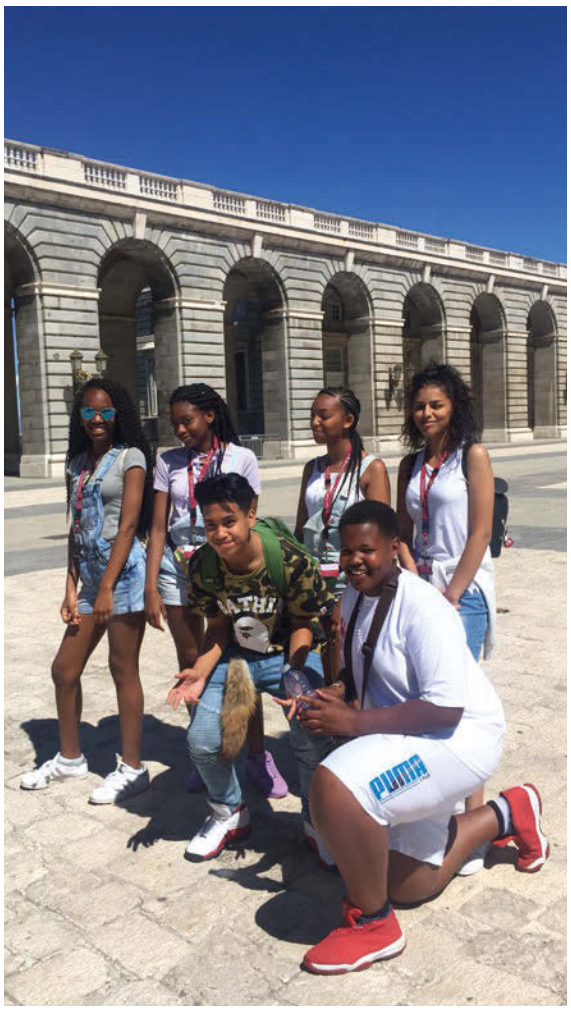

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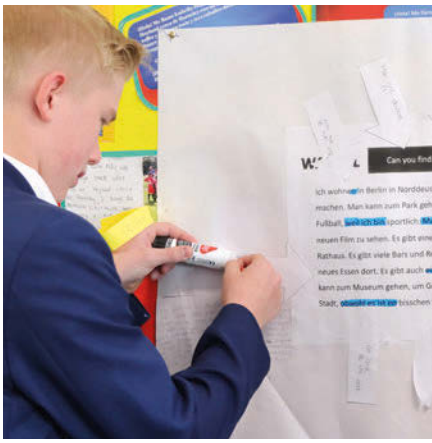
Work those WALLS

Stop seeing your classroom displays as merely ornamental and start treating your walls as the powerful learning resource they actually are, urge **Claire Gadsby** and **Jan Evans**...



Teachers invest a lot of time and energy producing attractive wall displays of which they can be proud. However, we would like to ask the question – '*If it is merely beautiful, why not just put up Laura Ashley wallpaper?*'

Having worked in hundreds of schools over the years, we have come across many well-intentioned policies and guidelines for displays. Indeed, we remember well the days of triple-mounting and neatly aligned staples. Whilst many of these policies aim to create attractive and stimulating environments, they are often concerned primarily with aesthetics, and with the outcomes of pupil and staff work.

They also tend to assume that any information presented on the walls is automatically being noted, understood and retained by all pupils. Perhaps this is hardly surprising when we consider some definitions of the word 'display' – '*A collection of objects arranged for public viewing*' or '*A show or event staged for public exhibition or entertainment.*'

Even when used as a verb – '*to put something in a prominent place so that it may readily be seen*' – the implied action is relatively finite. Once again the emphasis is on the product. As a result, walls are often used to house attractive, but static displays of finished work.

Whilst celebrating pupils' achievements is undoubtedly important, this approach does little to support them and move their learning forward. So what needs to happen?

Repurposing

For all our well-intentioned policies and the effort put into creating displays, it can be argued that this is not having a significant enough impact on learning. Pupils are not routinely engaging with what is on their walls.

The novelty of even the most striking display soon fades to 'wallpaper' and does little to actively engage the pupils in thinking about the content, even if it is occasionally referred to by the teacher. However, by consciously making thinking processes and pupil progress highly visible – through well-structured, purposeful and dynamic displays – these spaces can pay dividends.

> **"The novelty of even the most striking display soon fades to wallpaper"**

Guidelines issued by nasen in relation to classroom displays and pupils with SEND recommend that teachers ensure their displays:

- Are informative, interactive and relevant
- Are uncluttered, so that information can be easily found
- Can be seen from every position in the classroom and be used regularly by all pupils as a point of reference
- Show a good use of colour, avoiding white backgrounds and black text
- Show keywords that are understood by all pupils
- Celebrate pupils' work and make them feel valued

These guidelines contain well-thought-out, useful advice that would actually benefit all pupils, not just those with SEND – but it's most important to note that word '*interactive*'.

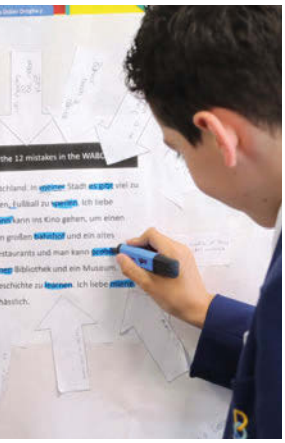
The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit (see bit.ly/ts126-EEFTK) demonstrates that teaching metacognition can have a very positive effect on pupils' outcomes. Pupils must be supported to engage with challenging concepts and articulate and own their learning. If used to stretch pupils and engage them in active responses, wall display space can become a vibrant, high-profile, public area for developing and refining higher-order thinking skills.

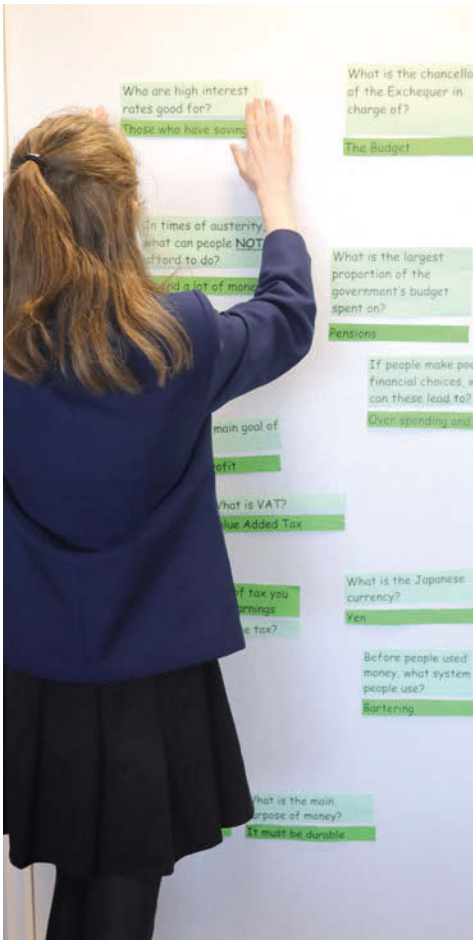
Reweighting

Wall space is limited, and therefore valuable, so ultimately it needs to cover those things that pupils find most difficult to understand and remember.

There is a value judgement to be made here. The display you have in mind, or have historically used may be beautiful. It may be celebratory. It may even make the pupils feel proud. All important points that have their place – but as the Pareto principle (named after the economist Vilfredo Pareto) reminds us, around 20% of the inputs lead to around 80% of the outputs with surprising frequency (Koch, 2017).

In education, this broadly means that a relatively small number of vital concepts may hold significant value in terms of academic achievement. The challenge is to work out which concepts are the most essential in each





subject, and so should be prioritised or front-loaded.

Impactful content, we believe, should have priority when it comes to display space. Also, size matters. Big messages need big writing – sometimes *very* big! Currently, many displays are essentially invisible to pupils due to the size of their lettering and positioning – often high up or at the back of the classroom.

Ask yourself – what is in the immediate eyeline of your pupils and what is on the peripheries? Is this weighted correctly? Are you doing enough with the space around the board, as this tends to be the focus of attention in most classrooms?

Re-energising existing displays

There are some easy techniques you can use for tweaking your existing classroom display. These typically require a small amount of preparation, but will immediately increase the potential for active engagement and responses from your pupils:

Reframing

Rewrite success criteria as questions and display these prominently alongside the finished product. Beside a display of artwork, for example, you could ask, '*Where can you see examples of perspective?*' This simple change immediately challenges the pupils to think and respond, leading to rich opportunities for discussion, clarification of misconceptions, and peer and self-assessment.

If we are serious about facilitating the deep learning required in the National Curriculum, we need to go even further. For instance, after an appropriate period of familiarisation time, remove some prompt words from the display – perhaps replacing 'perspective' with 'p '. Now pupils are being called upon to recall the word or concept.

Finally, remove all scaffolds, even the initial letter clue. What can pupils recall now?

Pick a Prompt

Distribute paper or cardboard thought and speech bubbles to encourage the use of speculative language. Ask pupils to use them to record their ideas, and then position these in appropriate places around the classroom to jump-start thinking and discussion.

Some could have opening phrases like, '*Might …*', '*Could it …*', '*What if …*', '*I think …*', '*I wonder what …*', '*This seems to suggest …*' to which pupils can add their own contributions.

Laminating the bubbles will have the extra benefit of encouraging pupils to take risks with their thought processes, since they can easily amend what they've written after discussion and rethinking (while also enabling them to be reused).

Revisit, Resurrect and Revive

We have to ensure that displays of examplar work are used dynamically. Re-examine your existing exemplar displays by asking pupils questions such as:

'*What were you learning about here?*'

'*Are you still happy with this work?*'

'*Could you tell me more about …?*'

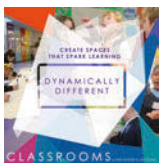
'*Is there anything you would change?*'

'*How could you use this learning elsewhere?*'

The emphasis here is on extending thinking, not merely remembering or revising. Establish the expectation that pupils will add extra ideas, reflective commentary, etc. to any 'finished' work that's on the walls.

PRINCIPLES TO UNDERPIN YOUR PRACTICE

- Maximise pupil engagement first and foremost. The walls don't just support the learning; they *are* the learning.
- Check that the time invested in setting up displays actually pays dividends. Are pupils being actively challenged to think, respond, reflect and remember?
- Acknowledge that not all displays need to be polished and static, but can be interactive working resources to which pupils regularly contribute – or even generate and manage themselves.
- Ensure that learning comes off the wall and into the lesson before travelling back to the wall for later retrieval.
- Remember that even small changes to displays can have a dramatic effect.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Claire Gadsby is an internationally renowned author, consultant, trainer and keynote speaker with more than 25 years' experience in education

Jan Evans is an education consultant with over 40 years' experience; she works with school leadership teams to develop strategic approaches to school improvement

This article is based on an abridged extract from their book, *Dynamically Different Classrooms: Create spaces that spark learning*, available now (Independent Thinking Press, £19.99)

Schools of thought

Colin Foster argues that receiving contradictory advice from colleagues is actually more helpful than it might initially seem...

Don't you hate it when you receive contradictory advice? You ask two colleagues for their opinion on some tricky teaching decision or situation, and they give you two opposing responses.

Let's say you have a class which always seems to be especially challenging whenever you do role play. One colleague advises that you need to do role play more often with that class, so that the students get used to working productively in that kind of mode.

Conversely, another colleague tells you that role play isn't going to work with every class – so if it clearly isn't a useful strategy with that particular class, just avoid it and focus on other approaches instead.

Who is right? What should you do? Is there any point asking for advice if well-meaning, experienced colleagues who seem to know what they're talking about can arrive at totally opposite conclusions?

Asking around

Of course, the simplest way to avoid receiving contradictory advice is never to ask for advice in the first place – at least not from more than one person on any one topic. But this is hardly an attractive option.

In schools we are surrounded every day by expertise of all kinds, and it would be an enormous missed opportunity to not seek any benefit from this. Teachers can easily become siloed in their classrooms – struggling alone with issues that the person in the classroom next door might well have some valuable input and insight into, if only they were asked. Shunning all advice completely seems like a wasteful overreaction to the risk of receiving contradictory advice.

Similarly, putting all your eggs in one basket by asking just one person fails to fully utilise the resources available to you. No one has absolute wisdom on all things. We're all human, and simply doing our best to figure out how to operate within the complexities of a school environment.

If you want to maximise your opportunities for learning from your colleagues' wisdom, then getting a second, or even third opinion from someone with different expertise and experience would seem to make sense.

It then falls to the person asking to synthesise the advice given and come up with a way forward – but how can we do that when, as so often seems to be the case, the advice received is at least partially, if not fully contradictory?

Different circumstances

Contradictory advice may not be as bad as it seems, and we should perhaps not be so surprised when this is what we receive. We've all encountered well-known proverbs which seem to contradict each other – '*Birds of a feather flock together*' telling us that similar people tend to associate, while '*Opposites attract*' asserts the reverse.

'*Great minds think alike*' holds that when people agree, they're probably right. On the other hand, we're also told that '*Fools seldom differ*'. It seems that whatever the circumstance, we can always find a proverb that will enable us to say, '*I told you so!*' In circumstances like these, which one is right?

I think the answer is not 'either/or' but rather 'both/and'. In different circumstances, at different times and in different situations, either of those aforementioned proverb pairs might be correct. Which is different to concluding that all proverbs are useless and that we should ignore them completely .

On the face of it, they can't give us instantly applicable instructions about what we should do because they directly contradict each other – but they can be useful in prompting us to think about extreme possibilities.

"We may sometimes receive contradictory advice because 'the truth' lies somewhere in the middle"

The wisdom of extremes

When everyone turns up at a meeting being of one mind on some matter, thinking identically about what to do, we may indeed quip that '*Great minds think alike*'. But at the same time, we should also consider the perils of groupthink, and whether we might be operating from within a bubble that sees things the same way. We should question whether there might be some benefit in considering alternative approaches that don't come to mind so easily.

There is wisdom in considering both extremes before making a decision. It's sometimes said that one way to empower someone is to "Never give advice," but to rather "always give mutually contradictory suggestions."

The thinking behind this notion is that we must avoid usurping this person's autonomy by 'telling them' what they must do. Instead, we should force them into actively making a choice. They have to select from at least two options, or else come up with a third option themselves.

Of course, there's also an added bonus in that not giving direct advice ourselves, but offering in its place the wisdom of extremes, protects us from being blamed if things don't turn out well…

The wisdom of compromises

Then again, we may sometimes receive what appears to be contradictory advice because 'the truth' lies somewhere in the middle. If were to plot our colleagues' advice on a chart, we may occasionally find ourselves presented with an inverted U-shaped curve containing a 'happy median' or 'sweet spot' somewhere in the middle. The contradictory advice, taken together, is essentially steering us away from both extremes and towards some kind of optimal middle.

That said, we could equally be looking at a visual representation of the saying, '*Different strokes for different folks*'. On some occasions, or for some students, Advice A will work. At other occasions, or with different students, Advice B will prove to be more effective. Having both avenues at their disposal will, if nothing else, at least empower the teacher by having more than one option to pursue which may or may not work.

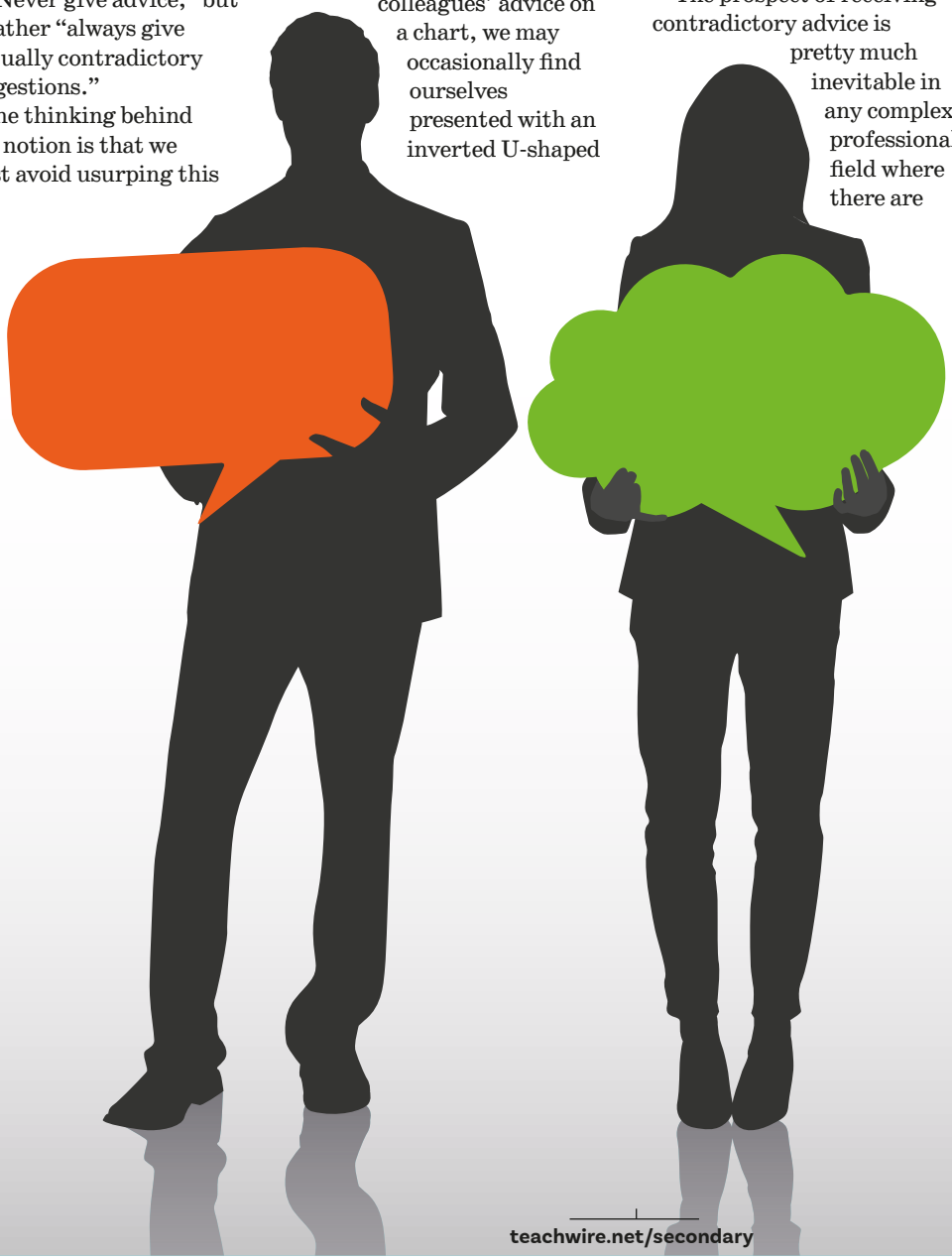
The prospect of receiving contradictory advice is pretty much inevitable in any complex professional field where there are multiple factors at play. Personal advice, and even research evidence will rarely tell us '*You must do this!*' More often than not, the conclusions will be nuanced, and require the application of our own craft, knowledge and judgment. Having multiple options available will equip us to make a confident choice, and then really go for the option selected – while still granting enough flexibility to adapt and switch things up if necessary.

Mixed motives

Contradictory advice may even be telling us that *either option is okay*, since both come with a good recommendations. What matters is that we enthusiastically opt for one of them.

Finally, it's worth bearing in mind that we can sometimes have mixed motives when asking others for advice – perhaps in the hope that we're recommended one course of action over another. Contradictory advice in this case lets us select whichever option we subconsciously want to hear and ignore potential challenges.

However, as the saying goes, good advice will often '*Disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed.*' Many of us will sometimes want to escape being challenged, which is why it can be good practice to think carefully about *both* extremes before settling on a way forward.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University, and has written many books and articles for teachers; find out more at foster77.co.uk

Lend a HELPING HAND

Don't be the kind of school leader who leaves their ECTs to fend for themselves – be one who helps them to hit the ground running, urges **Dr Chris Baker**...

Each year, thousands of teachers will commence their first role in the profession as ECTs at new schools. Sadly, each year will also see thousands of ECTs spend those first few weeks in a haze of confusion and dented confidence.

If they want to do the best by their staff and students, school leaders must therefore proactively seek to soften the impact of that inevitable drop in confidence that takes hold every September.

The self-efficacy lull

Confidence is a powerful thing, and often the unconscious driving force behind our thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions. Our levels of task-specific confidence – or 'self-efficacy', as the literature would have it – will help to either push us towards, or pull us away from starting tasks and challenges. It moderates how much effort we apply, and guides us in either persisting or giving up in the face of adversity.

The godfather of self-efficacy is Albert Bandura. His work highlighted how our perceived levels of task-specific confidence are extremely dynamic and fluctuate almost constantly due to past experiences, comparisons with others and social or internal persuasion.

Faced with a completing set of algebraic equations or a 10k run, we'll seek out 'evidence' to decide how confident we feel. Have we been successful at such tasks before? Have we seen others similar to us be successful? Is there anyone else – or our own internal voice – telling us we can or can't succeed?

Changes to our context can also have an impact. ECTs taking up their first post will almost always experience a dip in their confidence that we could call a 'self-efficacy lull'. If unrecognised and unresolved, these lulls could cause otherwise capable ECTs to doubt their abilities, second-guess their decision-making and lower their expectations.

The good news, however, is that leaders can proactively reduce the impact of these lulls by focusing on two key areas – ensuring that ECTs have clear mental models, and that they feel psychologically safe.

> ***"It's important that leaders create an environment in which ECTs are able to feel vulnerable"***

Mental models

Mental models are our personal representations of what things are and how they work. Peps Mccrea's work on 'developing expert teaching' suggests that these mental models typically drive how we behave, which has a direct influence on our impact and effectiveness.

If our mental model of something like feedback is accurate, we can use that clarity to ensure we perform feedback tasks correctly, which in turn should then lead to the desired impact. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. If you're like me, you can track many of your past mistakes back to a lack of understanding – or in other words, an inaccurate mental model.

ECTs have two major mental model challenges to overcome. They will have formed existing models during their training year which may not be accurate, and they will have a complete absence of any models for the school-specific systems, processes and behaviours they're about to experience.

School leaders must therefore invest significant time into an ECT induction process that goes beyond the provision of a school handbook and a tour of the reprographics room, and into a much deeper exploration of understanding. ECTs should have complete clarity around

school systems and processes such as attendance, behaviour, reporting and everything else they'll be expected to utilise and be evaluated on.

Differing experiences

Leaders mustn't assume that all ECTs are created the same. since the reality is that their training experiences will vary greatly, and their understanding of effective teaching and learning may also differ.

Less glamorous than pedagogy, but equally important to ECT clarity and effectiveness are the expectations around staff conduct. Leaders can't justifiably challenge behaviours that haven't been fully explained, and so elements such as directed time, communication protocols, line management structures and even dress code shouldn't be left to osmosis.

Leaders who devote time to exploring and refining ECT mental models will be investing in not just their relationships with those teachers, but also the learning experiences of their students.

Psychological safety

The complexity of schools and the pace of early September means that even with the best induction process, there could still be a residual amount of confusion for ECTs and inaccuracies in their mental models.

This means it's important that leaders create an environment in which ECTs are able to feel vulnerable, and free to seek out answers to any lingering questions. This sense that one won't be punished or humiliated for expressing ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes is termed 'psychological safety', and has been shown to be a significant factor in the success of many teams and organisations.

US academic Amy Edmondson's work on this topic shows that when leaders get it right, they can dramatically increase feelings of belonging, inclusion and authenticity among their staff, leading to greater engagement and commitment. Get it wrong, and you have environments where staff feel they need to self-censor and hold back from being their true selves. Confusion lingers, with questions going unasked, good ideas never making it to the table and ineffective practices persisting due to lack of any challenge.

I expect we've all previously been in psychologically unsafe situations where a leader proposes a plan of action and receives what looks like an approving silence from their audience, only for that idea to then be picked apart once individuals are out of the meeting and back within the safety of their peer group.

Creating the culture

ECTs are in both a challenging and privileged position when it comes to psychological safety. Their newness to the school may initially lead them to self-censor, as they don't want to seem weak, needy or bother people – but at the same time, it's that very newness that gives them licence to ask lots of questions.

The challenge for leaders is to not passively allow the inevitable variation in ECT safety to govern those first few weeks of September. To create psychologically safe environments, leaders must clearly communicate a desire for honesty, an openness to curiosity and their own fallibility.

They need to create a culture and set up processes that enable them to catch and correct misconceptions before they can have a negative impact, and celebrate those who bravely decide to ask questions, put forward ideas or present an alternative points of view.

Leaders who do this successfully can cultivate relationships generated through complete clarity – the positivity of which will be subsequently magnified to the benefit of students and the school as whole.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Dr Chris Baker is leader of professional development at the Cabot Learning Federation

SAFE AND SOUND

Six ways in which leaders can create psychologically safe environments

1 **Speak last**
Listen to others before adding your input; going first may lead others to self-censor because their views don't match.

2 **Propose provisionally**
Always leave room for discussion and alternative viewpoints.

3 **Model vulnerability**
Recount personal mistakes or times of confusion so others can follow.

4 **Regularly reset permissions**
Remind staff about your desire for honesty and the importance of psychological safety.

5 **Celebrate vulnerability**
Praise those who suggest, question and challenge.

6 **Fail forward**
Treat mistakes as stepping stones to further improvements and innovation.

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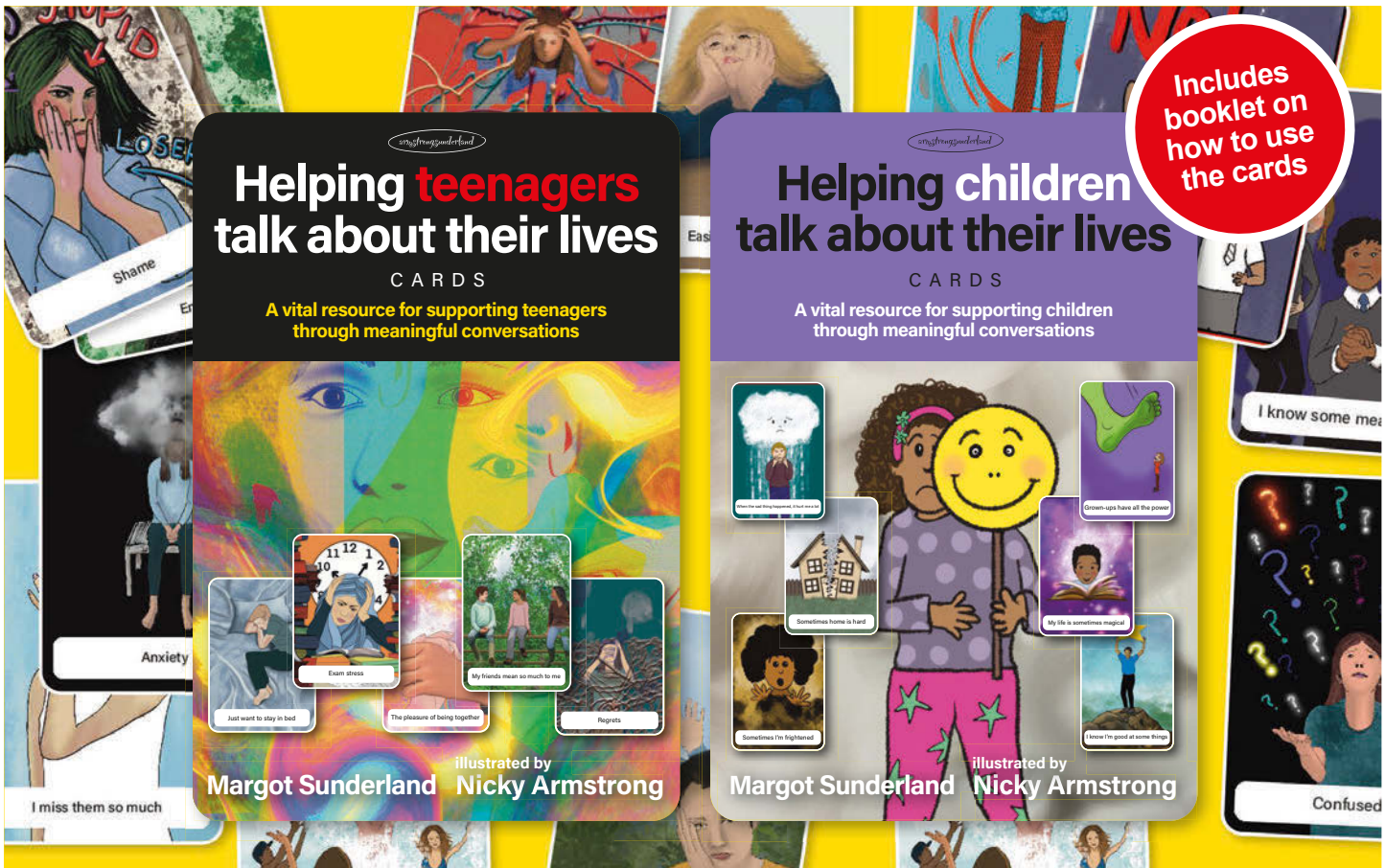

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The appliance OF SCIENCE

The UK's science sector needs new recruits, notes John Mendenhall – so how can we persuade our students to step up?

Between December 2022 and February 2023, there were 56% more unfilled job vacancies in the science industry compared to the start of 2020, just before the pandemic. The UK's science sector is desperately looking to the next generation to drive ideas and innovation – so why aren't young people wanting to step up to the challenge and become scientists?

Surprisingly, it's not just traditional science subjects that are failing to capture the imagination of students. The UK also faces a massive shortage of tech skills, with 95% of employers looking for tech talent struggling to fill vacancies over the past year.

When it comes to inspiring a love of computer programming among students, many schools face a number of challenges with respect to their lesson delivery – from deciding which programming language would be best for students to learn, to the need for regular maintenance of classroom computer systems and even sourcing the talent to teach classes.

Initially, some students can be put off by the type of learning that typically accompanies the study of sciences. There can be large reams of vocabulary to learn in biology, a heavy emphasis on maths in physics and complex equations to grapple with in chemistry. The three disciplines are all distinct, of course, but they do feed off one another – which is what I believe can really bring the sciences to life, and make the subject family much more interesting and engaging for students.

Interdisciplinary learning

At ACS International School Egham, we seek to encourage this via the International Baccalaureate's Middle Year Programme's dedicated unit of interdisciplinary learning. This sees students bring together concepts or methods from two or more disciplines in order to solve a specific problem or raise a certain question.

Over the course of this unit, we're able to show students how all the sciences fit together and how a single skill that may at first seem only relevant to, say, biology, can also be used to support experiments in chemistry.

In our experience, teachers should also consider putting as much emphasis as possible on practical activities – ideally by creating compelling ways of enabling students to undertake such activities themselves. How can we teach about something as abstract as a cell or atom? Hands-on activities can be crucial for helping children get to grips with what's actually happening inside biological and physical structures.

It's important to note that inspiring kids in science via practical activities needn't entail having access to cutting edge technology. As exciting as the likes of virtual reality may be, sometimes it's just better if students are able to physically interact with an activity in some way; to hold an object in their hands and visualise how the different pieces of a particular topic or concept fit together. Even something as simple as the act of building a LEGO® model can help students grasp key points regarding the area they're learning about.

Inspiring minds

Students are motivated to learn when they can see direct impact of what they're learning about on their surroundings. That's why, at ACS Egham, we encourage our students to consider the value of science in the wider world, and why individuals with scientific knowledge play such an important role within wider society.

For example, young people passionate about reducing the impact of climate change will be naturally interested in learning about electricity generation, renewable energy sources and how the Earth's natural resources can be harnessed to generate power. Once students discover more about the science behind these processes, they can see how advances in renewable energy are driven by principles that are actually quite easy to understand.

The sciences can, and should be all about inspiring inquisitive minds via the undertaking of tangible experiments; about observing mind-boggling scientific solutions, and exploring the fascinating work and determination that led to scientific breakthroughs throughout history.

There's more than enough information and material out there. We just need to bring it all to life, by providing answers to the questions curious students have about the application of science in the real world. This way, I'm certain we'll be able inspire the next generation of budding scientists.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
John Mendenhall is an international baccalaureate science teacher at ACS International School Egham

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KS3 English Coordinator, Claremont High School

"English teachers have a huge amount of marking to do, so to know these have been self-marked, and that we're then able to see where, as a class, our strengths and weaknesses are, is huge."

Head of English, The Hayling College

"It's a colourful, bright and vibrant resource, and contains prescient materials that pupils relate to, so [they] are becoming really passionate about the lessons taking place."

English Teacher, St John Fisher and Thomas More Roman Catholic High School

Your safeguarding TO-DO LIST

Ann Marie Christian highlights the safeguarding developments, trends and priorities that school leaders should be paying attention to over the coming academic year...

Some years ago, safeguarding arrangements within schools became an important part of Ofsted's inspection framework. Part of my role involves visiting schools across the world and inland UK to carry out reviews and audits of schools' safeguarding provision – a privileged position that enables me to notice a range of recurrent safeguarding themes and concerns I'm going to share with you here.

In 2015, Dr Carlene Firmin from University of Bedfordshire introduced the concept of 'Contextual safeguarding', with 'Risk outside the family home' eventually being added to the government's statutory Keeping Children safe in Education (KCSiE) guidance (see bit.ly/ts117-kcsie).

This meant that schools and colleges would now be expected to monitor risks in their local area and join families in supporting pupils' safety accordingly. The upshot was that schools began to regularly liaise not just with parents on safeguarding matters, but also police authorities, local retailers, businesses and other local organisations.

Despite progress being made in the years since then, I've still seen first-hand how pupils will speak of worries regarding their journeys to school, with certain underpasses, alleyways and bus routes identified as being potentially dangerous.

School staff often won't be aware of these concerns, especially those driving in each day from other villages and towns. Yet it remains the case that contextual safeguarding questions are routinely asked during inspections, which means school and college staff should be aware of nearby trouble spots and any action by local partnership agencies.

That's why it's vital to prepare recent case studies that demonstrate how your school has successfully protected children using the contextual safeguarding model.

> **"Harms can be reduced by working to make the language we use more inclusive and welcoming"**

Bullying and microaggressions

Next, child-on-child harm. Back in the pre-'Everyone's Invited' world, the DfE published its first Sexual Violence and Harassment Guidance for Schools and Colleges in 2017, which was subsequently revised in 2018 and 2021.

More recently, the guidance has been embedded in Part Five of the KCSiE 2022 guidance and expanded to include physical harm, sexual harm, neglect, emotional harm and harms stemming from child-on-child incidents. The latter, more commonly known as 'bullying', has been with us for many years, of course – but how often and how consistently are such incidents currently being recorded?

Many pupils in school settings will frequently experience microaggressions. Pupils with protected characteristics will often experience them almost daily from peers, and even sometimes – if unintentionally – from school staff.

Pupils will frequently detail microaggressions they've experienced to trusted peers and chosen staff. When it's fed back to staff, the nature of the microaggressions – especially racism – will be known to them already, but not necessarily their short- and long-term impact or frequency.

Issues relating to gender, sexuality and LGBTQIA+ identity will commonly come up in this context and in discussions with senior leaders. If you don't already, reflect on the gendered pronouns we all use daily and the impact this can have on pupils who may be non-binary or otherwise questioning their gender.

Harms can be reduced by working to make the language we use more inclusive and welcoming to all. Have you, for instance, questioned the titles of 'head girl' and 'head boy?' Could you simply recognise your 'head pupils' instead?

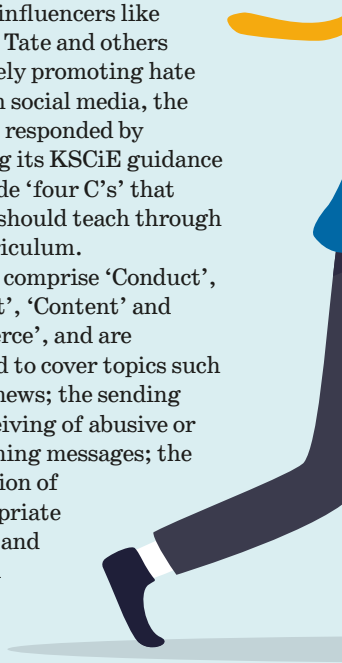
It should also be noted that neurodiverse pupils are more likely to experience microaggressions than most – sometimes due to not understanding the intent of sarcasm directed at them, and experiencing child-on-child harms as a result.

Conduct, Contact, Content, Commerce

It's perhaps to be expected, yet still disappointing to see that sexism, racism, and homophobia all continue to be major safeguarding concerns.

With influencers like Andrew Tate and others effectively promoting hate crime on social media, the DfE has responded by updating its KSCiE guidance to include 'four C's' that schools should teach through the curriculum.

These comprise 'Conduct', 'Contact', 'Content' and 'Commerce', and are intended to cover topics such as fake news; the sending and receiving of abusive or threatening messages; the production of inappropriate content and problem



gambling, among others.

Another trend increasingly seen across schools is the adoption of discriminatory, and thus de facto unlawful uniform policies. I recently visited a Christian school where Muslim children could apply and be accepted on roll but were not allowed to wear their hijab at school. Staff could wear them – but not students.

We also continue to see huge misunderstandings when the basic physical properties of textured, curly and afro hair conflict with schools' expectations around students' personal appearance and hair styling. I'm aware of one boarding school that told a student his Afro was too high. Are there any schools telling children with 'European hair' to cut it because it's too long?

Finally, a relatively recent consideration for schools are the arrangements around changing rooms, boarding houses, toilets and dormitories on residential trips, and whether these need to be adapted to support transgender and non-binary pupils. It's important to bear in mind that the legal safeguarding framework requires schools to protect the welfare of every child.

Too much responsibility?

This brings us to matters of safeguarding governance, and the failures caused when individuals lacking adequate expertise and preparation are appointed to the 'link governor' role responsible for safeguarding.

Some chairs have consequently opted to take on the link governor role themselves, in addition to their existing duties – but both roles are essential, and entail a huge amount responsibility for one person.

Given the importance of safeguarding in school inspections, this move can perhaps be excused if enacted as a strictly temporary arrangement, but not if it's intended as a long-term solution. Best practice in this area would see the formation of dedicated safeguarding subcommittees, which would be responsible for scrutinising all safeguarding expectations – everything from being vigilant around issues such as female genital mutilation, to managing their school's Prevent duties and implementing safe recruitment policies.

Joint working between a school's HR team and the Designated Safeguarding Lead is essential for getting recruitment right. In 2014, specific training expectations and renewal dates concerning safer recruitment practices were removed from the KCSIE guidance, leading to a noticeable deterioration in knowledge and updates in this area thereafter. Things get more complicated still when the HR team of a local authority is working to different standards than the centralised HT teams of nearby MATs.

More recently, it's the case that many schools and colleges are still yet to fully complete their required online safer recruitment training, but will boast about their latest training attendance figures.

Needless to say, when it comes to light that they're unaware of statutory safeguarding changes made since 2020, things start to get awkward…

A question of trust

Last of all, let's talk about agency-sourced catering, cleaning and supply staff. Schools typically trust their agencies to follow robust recruitment practices, but will rarely be aware of the relevant details.

Have people at the relevant agencies attended safer recruitment training within the last three years? Can they produce any certification? Does the agency bring up any safeguarding questions during face-to-face interviews? Have they had sight of their workers' DBS certificates?

School staff will often assume that agency workers have received safeguarding training within the last 12 months, but how do they know for sure? How many agency staff have actually read the latest KCSiE guidance and signed to confirm they understand it?

STAY UP TO DATE

- Read the latest KCSiE guidance from front to back, highlighting any changes you see compared previous revisions and when/how these will be enacted
- Ensure key staff have attended credible safer recruitment training and that the 2020 changes are firmly embedded within your recruitment processes
- Visit the Contextual Safeguarding website (safeguarding.network) to complete a mapping exercise concerning nearby locations where students feel unsafe
- Carry out a pupil survey asking them about child-on-child harms (whether emotional, physical, neglectful and/or sexual in nature) in order to better understand their lived experience

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ann Marie Christian is a safeguarding and child protection expert; for more information, visit annmariechristian.com

Do less, achieve more

If you want your neurodiverse learners to thrive, suggests **Lucy Kuper**, step away from the detailed behaviour policies and concentrate on your rapport...

A 'do less, get more' approach may seem like a paradoxical suggestion when considering how to better support neurodiverse SEND children – but with a few savvy, evidence-based strategies to hand, you can indeed support these learners in your classroom almost effortlessly.

The vast majority of SEND learners fall into a series of broad difficulty categories – including, but by no means limited to, attention span, coordination, literacy and motor/language/social/planning and organisation skills.

These types of learning disorders might be labelled as 'autism', 'dyslexia', 'ADHD', 'dyspraxia', 'dysgraphia' – but could just as easily not be formally diagnosed, since the practice of obtaining of a diagnosis can be expensive, and will often be privately paid for by parents.

It's important to be aware of how neurodiverse children can present in the classroom. Diagnosed or undiagnosed, they make up a significant 80% of the SEND learner cohort – and that proportion is rising.

Lost and confused

Many learners will fail in the classroom because they haven't developed enough in the way of learning skills to support the demands of otherwise routine academic learning. Often, it may be that an individual lacks a fundamental classroom skill such as literacy, reading comprehension, writing and/or reading fluency.

It's very easy for these children to get lost – and also exhausting, frustrating and confusing. These learners will frequently lack confidence and self-esteem, with poor learning behaviours often masking an underlying difficulty with accessing the classroom.

The process of making your classroom a safer and more accessible learning environment is the essence of 'reasonable adjustments' and measures set out in the SEN Code of Practice (see bit.ly/ts116-sgp3).

SEN learners tend to thrive in classrooms where there's a strong rapport between teacher and students. This kind of environment will give them the resilience and motivation that leads to higher levels of study, hard work and focus. That's not just good for the mental health of your students, but will also make your classroom a safe environment in which children get to feel valued and empowered to succeed and thrive.

> **"SEN learners tend to thrive in classrooms where there's a strong rapport between teacher and students"**

Teacher rapport

Being a kind and likeable teacher will go a long way towards supporting vulnerable learners, to the point of altering the learning trajectories of neurodiverse students.

That said, the prospect of trying to avoid arguments with children who have autism or struggle with social interaction, moments of high drama stemming from the behaviour of a child with ADHD and poor handwriting encountered while marking are all going to make your job harder.

There some who might advocate for strict, 'zero tolerance' discipline and behaviour policies, but such 'stick over carrot' approaches are known to push children already struggling with academic routines even further away from the learning fold. Once you realise that student-teacher rapport is the X-factor at play here, rather than just planning and marking, things will become considerably easier.

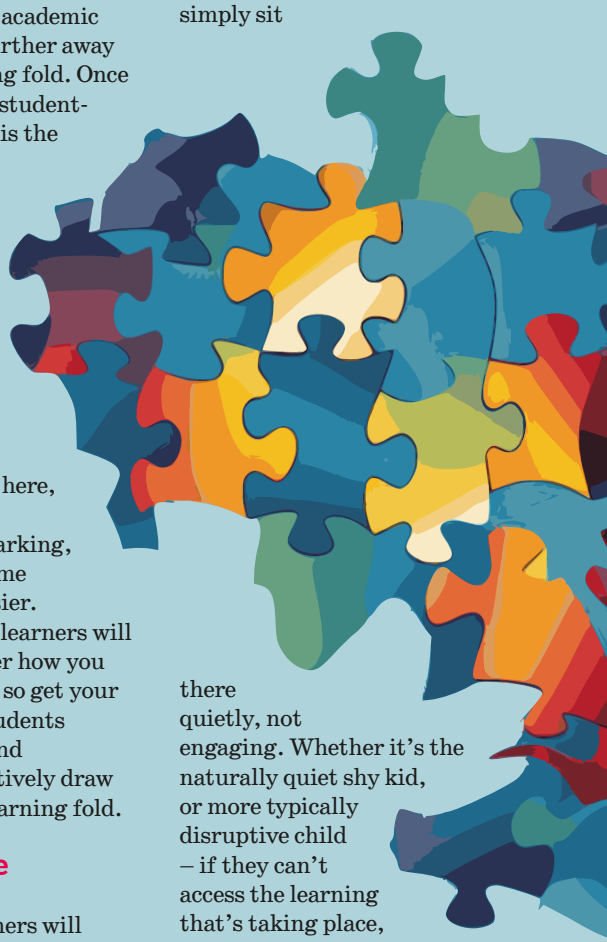
Neurodiverse learners will always remember how you made them feel, so get your neurodiverse students feeling valued and appreciated. Actively draw them into the learning fold.

Collaborative philosophy

Many SEN learners will experience difficulties with maintaining their attention and concentration, and reading at a certain skill level. They'll get lost easily, unsure of which page they need to be on or what it is they're supposed to be learning.

Encouraging a more caring classroom environment with a reduced sense of competition can contribute towards creating a setting that's not just better for SEND learners, but for everyone else in class as well.

Never underestimate the extent to which a learner with SEND learner might not be accessing their learning in the ways they ought to be. Often, they can simply sit there quietly, not engaging. Whether it's the naturally quiet shy kid, or more typically disruptive child – if they can't access the learning that's taking place, you have a problem.



Collaborative learning involves understanding that children can support other children in their learning. It's about making sure

students understand the tasks they've been set and where they should be, and then feel able to share and talk about ideas and learning.

To that end, do what you can to create a culture in which children are constantly learning and sharing from one another, being mindful of the extent to which children will tend to listen more to their peers than to the adults in their lives.

Far from holding non-SEND students back, as is often feared, this cooperative approach allows for a greater application of students' verbal skills, as they're called upon to explain their ideas and concepts to each other, mutually reinforcing their learning and understanding in the process. Let your learners take the lead in supporting one another.

Practical considerations

Technology can, of course, be a hugely helpful aid to neurodiverse learners – for instance, by having laptops read text aloud, thus enabling some learners to express their knowledge and emotions non-verbally.

Where movement breaks are concerned, I tend to build in short breaks when I observe learners running low on attention and concentration levels. Movement breaks are an easy way of setting aside a quick two or three minutes for physical movement, which can completely shift the energy in the room so that when you go back, everybody's suddenly a better learner for it.

That brings us to metacognition, and the benefits of students being able to understand the learning process itself. The more successful learners in your class will know how and what to do, but neurodiverse learners stuggling in class typically won't – which is partly why they struggle.

My own favourite metacognition tips include reading back your writing and self-correcting to sharpen literacy skills. I tell my class that if they find a mistake but are able to self-correct it themselves, then it's almost as if they never made that mistake in the first place.

Quiet classrooms

Yet for all the gains to be had from discussion-heavy collaborative learning, quiet classrooms can be particularly effective for reading and writing activities. Vary things, so that alongside those buzzy class discussions there are also quiet classroom sessions that are dense with learning. Undertake more cognitively demanding writing tasks during these, Neurodiverse students, who can have trouble concentrating in the presence of too much noise, are likely to find these especially helpful.

The best ideas around classroom practice aimed at bringing out the best in your neurodiverse learners will likely not focus so much on planning or marking. Instead, focus your efforts on making the classroom a walk in the park – both for you, and your students.

What's most important is how you make your students feel; how you motivate and include them, and ultimately what you're doing to create a learning environment that's rich in nurturing strategies for all learners.

IN BRIEF

- Tailor your teaching to an inclusive, neurodiverse classroom
- Nurture positive teacher-learner relationships that draw the most reluctant students into the learning fold
- Make use of collaborative learning techniques and rich metacognition strategies that can help to bolster students' understanding of your subject.
- Ensure SEND learners have access to technologies they can use to express what they know more easily

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucy Kuper is a dyslexia specialist teacher and literacy consultant, prior to which she taught for 20 years at a series of inner London comprehensives; she is also a member of both Patoss, the professional association of teachers to students with specific learning difficulties, and the British Dyslexia Association

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ASK THE EXPERT

"Listen to the pupils!"

Find out what your learners can gain from getting involved in this national design challenge organised by the V&A...

Why did you decide to take part in V&A Innovate last year, and how did you integrate it into your schedule?

The ability to offer one day full of creative problem-solving challenges sat at the heart of my decision to run V&A Innovate, and taking Y7 off timetable was the only way we had to achieve this. As well as adding depth and breadth to our D&T curriculum, the activities also sat within our 'character curriculum', which aims to create the leaders of tomorrow. It was crucial that the day was as inclusive as possible, which meant that all pupils across Y7 were involved, with several older pupils assuming mentorship roles for those new to the programme.

What support and resources did you use? (classroom resources, CPD, etc.)

With several non-subject specialists running workshops throughout the day, we made use of the tremendous amount of resources offered by V&A Innovate, alongside some specific CPD on how the day would run. Some of the most useful resources created for pupils included mind/context mapping sheets, product analysis prompt cards and portfolio templates.

What effect did taking part have on students throughout the process?

We have offered V&A Innovate to Y7 pupils within their first term at Houlton School, meaning they're very much thrown into the epicentre of Houlton School's pillars of Innovation, Aspiration and Excellence. This means every pupil is exposed to real world problems through a creative lens, while collaborating with peers and developing leadership skills. Pupils speak of the experience frequently, and it's clear V&A Innovate instigates further learning opportunities – from team work to public speaking.

EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Russell Hill

JOB TITLE:
Subject Team Leader: Creative at Houlton School

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Creative education

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Providing pupils with a safe and progressive environment in which failure and success are valued equally, championing creative risk-taking

How has participating in V&A Innovate developed your own teaching skills and practice?

Running V&A Innovate over one day to 180 pupils is challenging, and puts all my organisational and persuasive skills to the test. It was a risk at first, but I was confident that V&A Innovate's design could offer pupils considerable opportunities to develop various skills in preparation for 21st century life. As a teacher, it helped me gain experience when pitching ambitious ideas to our leadership team, but above all, helped affirm D&T as a critical component of any progressive curriculum.

What advice would you give to others considering taking part?

Listen to the pupils! They're the creative and critical thinkers of tomorrow, so be sure to check in with them about your plans prior to launch. You can collect their thoughts via surveys, comment cards or even informal chats over lunch. All pupils realise that this is a professional and industry standard process, and that their commitment and drive is critical.

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What will make YOUR STAFF STAY?

Making staff feel valued and understanding their concerns can be more important than pay, says **Sue Cowley**

The best outcomes for pupils come from being taught consistently by experienced and well qualified staff. This means that regardless of how well run your school is, having high-quality teachers is vital to achieve the best results.

Thinking about how best to retain staff, as well as considering approaches to effective recruitment, is therefore a crucial aspect of school improvement.

The benefits of retention

Where teachers stay in a school longer term, this ensures consistency for pupils and helps you build an effective team. The 'institutional memory' of a school can be lost where high staff turnover is an issue, with new teachers constantly having to learn the school's policies, ethos and approaches.

Retention is also important because of the cost and difficulty of recruiting new staff, especially at present. Unfortunately, schools in areas of disadvantage experience more difficulty recruiting staff than those in affluent areas.

A Sutton Trust report found that 85% of teachers in disadvantaged schools felt that their school's quality of education was affected by high staff turnover and difficulties in recruitment.

What the research says

Research by RAND Europe, commissioned by the Office of Manpower Economics, looked at factors influencing teacher retention in England. It found that pay and rewards were important for retaining staff.

However, workplace characteristics such as the working environment and a focus on minimising workload were often valued more highly by teachers than financial benefits.

A report on teacher recruitment and retention in England, published by the House of Commons Library in December 2022, noted that the overall number of qualified teachers has not kept pace with the number of pupils over the last decade.

Postgraduate teacher recruitment is 29% below target for the latest academic year, after relatively high recruitment in the previous two years, due to the pandemic. Some subjects are suffering from particularly low recruitment levels, with physics 83% below target.

The government has been using bursaries and scholarships to encourage both recruitment and retention. However, issues around workload persist, and impact negatively on retention, with 53% of primary teachers and 59% of lower secondary teachers currently of the belief that their workload is 'unmanageable'.

Retention concerns

A survey by the NEU in April 2022 showed a worrying picture of teacher retention in the profession. The survey found that 44% of England's state-school teachers plan to quit within five years, with 22% intending to leave within two years.

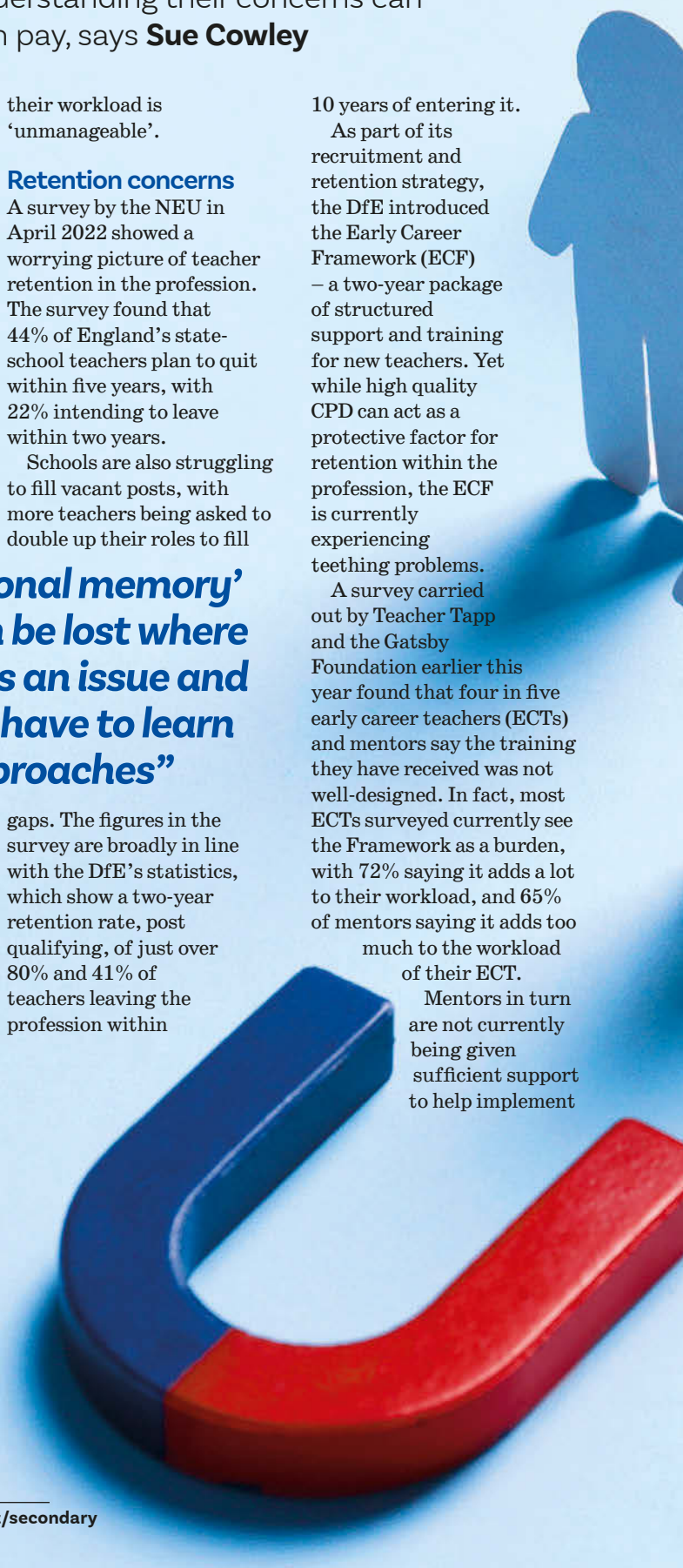
Schools are also struggling to fill vacant posts, with more teachers being asked to double up their roles to fill gaps. The figures in the survey are broadly in line with the DfE's statistics, which show a two-year retention rate, post qualifying, of just over 80% and 41% of teachers leaving the profession within 10 years of entering it.

> **"The 'institutional memory' of a school can be lost where high turnover is an issue and new teachers have to learn school approaches"**

As part of its recruitment and retention strategy, the DfE introduced the Early Career Framework (ECF) – a two-year package of structured support and training for new teachers. Yet while high quality CPD can act as a protective factor for retention within the profession, the ECF is currently experiencing teething problems.

A survey carried out by Teacher Tapp and the Gatsby Foundation earlier this year found that four in five early career teachers (ECTs) and mentors say the training they have received was not well-designed. In fact, most ECTs surveyed currently see the Framework as a burden, with 72% saying it adds a lot to their workload, and 65% of mentors saying it adds too much to the workload of their ECT.

Mentors in turn are not currently being given sufficient support to help implement



the training programme, with nearly half saying that they did not get additional non-contact time to work with ECTs. Four in five mentors say the requirements of being a mentor have added a lot to their workload.

Retention incentives

Characteristics of the workplace, such workload management, school culture, teaching environment, opportunities for progression and the quality of CPD all have an influence on staff retention.

As your most important resource, your staff need you to support their wellbeing and minimise their workload. Teachers who feel valued are more likely to be open with you about their plans, because of a sense of loyalty to the school. For instance, they might let you know that they are thinking of applying for a promotion at another school, giving you additional time to recruit a suitable replacement.

Recruiting and retaining high quality staff has a strong impact on disadvantaged children's outcomes, so schools can use Pupil Premium funds to support this work.

Getting recruitment right

With fewer teachers in the recruitment marketplace, it is important to market your school effectively to potential candidates. Your school website is your 'shop front' and the place where applicants start to get a feel for what your school is like.

Have a section listing the latest vacancies and consider including video clips to give a better sense of the workplace.

When advertising vacancies, consider how you might emphasise the benefits that you can offer the candidate, as well as what you want them to offer your school.

Highlight the work you do to reduce teacher workload in your school and talk about opportunities for career progression.

A recent Sutton Trust report, called the Recruitment Gap, identified that only a small percentage (10%) of staff would consider moving any distance for a 'dream job'. Most teachers willing to move to pursue career opportunities are younger and less likely to have family ties.

Experienced teachers are more likely to be attached to a specific area and less likely to move to find new roles, meaning that local recruitment strategies are key to recruiting experienced staff. For instance, using local press and local Facebook or parent WhatsApp groups, as well as more traditional outlets such as *Tes*, *Schools Week* and Indeed.

HELP STAFF FEEL VALUED

Key strategies for teacher retention include the following:

- Minimise demands that cause workload, such as requests for data collection
- Use a verbal feedback policy to minimise marking workload
- Discourage use of email outside working hours
- Where teachers take on additional roles, consider how to minimise other parts of their workload
- Offer staff time off to attend important family events
- Provide access to services that support staff wellbeing, such as free gym membership
- Organise daily benefits, such as free tea and coffee
- Fund an end of term meal to show staff how much you value them
- Offer flexible working as a powerful incentive to retain staff

Although 40% of women in the UK workforce work part time, this is only the case for 28% of female teachers. Increasing options for flexible working practices can increase equity and improve retention and recruitment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Sue Cowley is a teacher, author, trainer and keynote speaker, having taught in all phases of education and has helped manage her local early years setting for over a decade; for more information, visit suecowley.co.uk

How to build a HEALING CLASSROOM

Josh Corlett explains what schools can do to become islands of safety for refugee and asylum-seeking children

Against the backdrop of concurrent crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, the widening of asylum dispersal policies and the Homes for Ukraine scheme, many communities across the UK have welcomed more refugees than ever before over the past couple of years.

Almost overnight, some schools – particularly those in rural areas – went from never having had any refugee or asylum-seeking students to welcoming many in space of just a few days. And yet, in contrast to housing and healthcare providers or employers, schools are often left out of debates surrounding the resettlement and integration of refugees.

That's despite schools and teachers often being at the forefront of the support provided to refugee and asylum-seeking children and their families. The role that schools play in fostering smooth transitions from conflict and crisis zones into classrooms and wider communities can't be underestimated.

A safe place to land

In recognition of both the challenges and opportunities this can present for schools, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has set aside time and resources to support schools and teachers in creating safe, predictable environments in which refugee students can develop socially, emotionally and academically.

IRC's Healing Classrooms programme is specially adapted to fit the current UK context and has so far been delivered in over 500 schools across the country.

The transition from conflict and crisis zones to classrooms can sometimes take just a matter of days. Sometimes it can take years, with children and young people experiencing stays in multiple countries prior to their arrival in the UK. Even once they arrive, many young refugees and their families will remain in transient and precarious situations, often living in temporary accommodation and unsure of when they may have to move.

> *"Just because a student can't describe the water cycle in English, that doesn't mean they don't know what it is"*

With much of these children's formative years characterised by uncertainty and upheaval, schools can provide a hugely valuable sense of stability and predictability, and serve as islands of safety for young refugees and asylum seekers.

Individuals, not numbers

The first session in the Healing Classrooms programme examines the steps schools can take to ensure that newly arrived students feel safe and welcome in their new environment. Newly arrived children can often be seen as numbers rather than individuals, and feel like they have no control over their lives or futures.

School can provide a welcome opportunity for them to regain an element of control over their lives and rebuild those feelings of self-worth and safety.

To that end, schools should look at how they can make their learning environments as welcoming as possible for all students. This might involve the use of effective buddy systems and implementation of culturally responsive curriculums, through to translated signs positioned around the school and inclusive food options at lunch.

At the heart of the first Healing Classrooms session is the importance of embedding consistency throughout the school culture, and the need to ensure that school remains a safe place with consistent routines and no sudden surprises. Only then can children begin to recover, settle and learn.

A sense of community

As an organisation, we're fond of the saying, 'Refugees bring more than they carry' – and nowhere is this more apparent than in schools where newly arrived refugee students are viewed as assets to the school community, rather than burdens.

Newly arrived students need to feel valued as individuals and welcome in their new communities. They need to have trusted adults who

can support them, and be able to form healthy relationships with their peers. Extracurricular activities, whether related to sports or the arts, can provide outlets for students that are less reliant on speaking and understanding English.

Similarly, effective group work focused on specific projects, such as a school beautification initiative, can be an effective step that schools and teachers can take towards further building and developing their learning communities.

In order for newly arrived children to feel part of such communities, however, it's important that they be kept in mainstream lessons as much as possible. Regardless of their English proficiency, we'd only recommend separate English intervention in a minority of cases – yet unfortunately, we see this approach being adopted far too frequently.

Separating refugee students from their peers can create a physical and cultural separation that does little to help build the sense of community and belonging that's so vital if refugee students are to thrive. It should only ever be done under very specific, and even then, only strictly time limited circumstances.

IN NUMBERS

17.3 months

The estimated gap in attainment between resettled refugee and asylum-seeking children compared to their non-migrant peers

5%

The school absence rate of resettled refugee and asylum-seeking children

4.4%

the fixed period exclusion rate of resettled refugee and asylum-seeking children, compared to 7.1% among unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and 5.2% among non-migrant children

Source: 'The educational outcomes of refugee and asylum-seeking children in England' working paper produced by the Education Policy Institute (bit.ly/ts126-r1)

Prior knowledge

However, even when embedded in mainstream lessons, refugee students will often find themselves in low sets on account of their lack of – or perceived lack of – ability in speak in English. This misconception that fluency in English is an indicator of academic ability leads to students being placed in sets where behaviour is often worse, and teachers are less able to set aside time for additional support.

The final session of the Healing Classrooms programme seeks to address this by focusing on how schools can effectively foster academic success amongst newly arrived students. One way is by encouraging schools to let students work in their first languages, under certain circumst ances.

Teachers can be understandably hesitant to allow this, but it's a practice we ultimately recommend in structured environments where the cognitive challenge is high. For example, just because a student can't describe the water cycle in English, that doesn't necessarily mean they have no knowledge of what it is.

By allowing students to describe the water cycle in their own language first, before then translating this into a simpler English explanation, we're simply using all the languages they have at their disposal to facilitate learning, whilst also growing their English vocabulary.

Better still would be the provision of keyword worksheets translated into the student's language prior to lessons, which could help to unlock a wealth of prior knowledge that otherwise might be missed.

Ensuring that your curriculum is culturally responsive and reflective of the wider school community is important for ensuring academic success. By teaching in a way that engages learners whose experiences and cultures are often left out, we can ensure all students gain the critical consciousness and cultural competence needed to prosper, both socially and academically.

Trauma-informed approaches

A key pillar of our work centres around the embrace of a trauma-informed approach that equips teachers with the skills needed to better support students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. Schools have the potential to be environments of healing, where mental wounds caused by displacement can be alleviated, allowing children and young people to reclaim their sense of childhood.

For every student, regardless of background, school should be a safe and supportive environment where they feel a sense of belonging and self-worth. Given the right opportunities and support, refugee students can recover and thrive after experiencing trauma.

The most important message to take forward is that all classrooms can, and should be Healing Classrooms – and that it's easier than you may think to achieve this. Often, it's the smallest changes that can make the biggest impact for a refugee or asylum-seeking child in your classroom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Corlett is the UK education coordinator at the International Rescue Committee; for further details of the IRC's UK education programming, visit bit.ly/ts126-r2 or contact josh.corlett@rescue.org

All IRC training courses and supporting resources are provided free of charge

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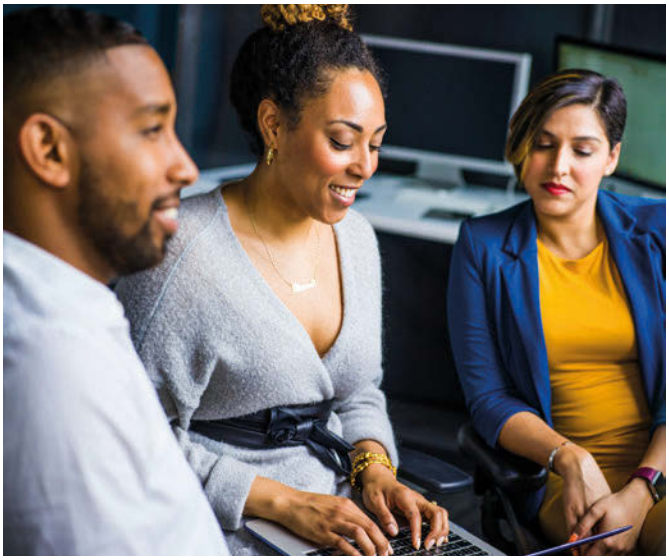

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Safeguarding is a rapidly evolving field, with new recommendations and updates being constantly released. Keeping up with these changes and ensuring the safeguarding procedures you've put in place are successful in protecting the people in your care can be challenging.

Children and young people face a growing number of problems and difficulties, so it's important to regularly review and update your current systems to ensure they are still relevant and functional, and that all staff members are following the procedures you have in place for handling any safeguarding concerns. After all, everyone has a duty to protect children and vulnerable adults.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Ofsted inspection outcomes show that schools are not meeting safeguarding requirements. A recent review undertaken by Mike Glanville via The Safeguarding Company showed that 22.85% of schools were rated Requires Improvement in this area, and 9.2% Inadequate, with the failings coming predominantly from 'Record and Case Management'.

The report further found that, "Some record-keeping is incomplete because leaders are not consistently logging and analysing the actions taken to keep pupils safe. This means pupils who may be at risk of harm are not always getting the support that they need." The report also highlighted the importance of proper training, as "Leaders and staff do not always recognise safeguarding incidents for what they are."

Determining your training requirements, as our audits do, can help your organisation use its existing safeguarding software to its fullest potential, and enhance overall organisation-wide safeguarding.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Mentor Safeguarding Self-Assessment tool and Audit services have been developed and delivered by our expert in-house Safeguarding Team, and are available in a range of options best suited to your needs, budgets and timeframes. Whilst the self-assessment is self-guided and easy to complete, the audits offer a more thorough review of your safeguarding practices.

Our audit services can help your school comply with regulatory advice, including the inspection frameworks used by Ofsted, Estyn, and the ISI, and ensure it's following industry standards for child safety appropriate to the setting. The audits provide thorough reporting and policy evaluations, and can identify any risks or holes in your safeguarding procedures that could leave you exposed, or in the worst-case scenario, put the children in your care at risk.

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GET INVOLVED

The self-assessment tools and audits include an executive summary, bespoke recommendations and considerations supported by evidence, with enhanced options available for larger organisations – such as 'deep dives' into your use of safeguarding software, spanning reporting systems, triaging/assessment of concerns, dashboard management and more. These safeguarding audits are for everyone, everywhere and can include existing Safeguarding Company software like MyConcern and Clarity, as well as other recording and case management products.

Passing on the torch

Ed Carlin looks at how school leaders can best develop their junior colleagues' ambitions and capacity to one day lead others themselves...

From the laying of its foundations, to the first building blocks and final structural supports, every outstanding school will foster leadership at all levels.

There are many ways of building leadership potential among school staff. My aim here is to outline those key strategies that will provide the pathways and opportunities your staff and pupils need in order to really flourish.

Trust your teachers

To harness leadership at all levels, we must first develop a sense of intentionality. Structured programmes can be made available to those wanting to improve their skills and potentially progress to the next level. Providing staff with the right opportunities aligned with the right resources, unprompted,will open the door to more collaborative, critical and creative thinking.

A programme focused on empowering teachers and putting trust in them to take key school priorities forwards – alongside tools for measuring their impact along the way – will provide the confidence and experience needed to lead others, and see school improvements through to their conclusion.

Our schools are peppered with innovative, enterprising and creative staff who possess the ability to bring about transformational change. Too often, however, talented teachers are confined to their classrooms and limited by traditional, yet blinkered approaches to cultivating their leadership skills.

Typically, it's only senior leaders at the helm when it comes to generating ideas for school development and improvement, implementing them and measuring their subsequent impact. So much talent is getting lost due to outdated structures entirely reliant on colleagues already in promoted posts leading the school improvement plan.

> *"Too often, talented teachers are limited by blinkered approaches to cultivating their leadership skills"*

Yes, teachers are usually given opportunities to make suggestions and potentially join development working groups – but is that enough?

Fertile soil

Imagine instead the shift in mindset we might see when an unpromoted teacher is given a key school priority to lead on and manage. With the right support and coaching, this could amount to fertile soil in which their true potential will be given the chance to flourish.

Having agreed on the project focus, there should a discussion of any barriers that will need to be addressed, so as to offset any unnecessary battles along the way. It's always useful at this stage to follow the 'W' method of considering who, what, why, when and where.

Mentors should consider coaching the member of staff prior to meetings, to help them frame the dialogue and focus on what they wish to get out of each conversation with staff they hope to bring on board with their ideas – whatever they may be.

One of the greatest barriers inexperienced leaders can face is having insufficient confidence when holding courageous conversations. Addressing problem areas and those who might be responsible for them is uncomfortable, but identifying areas for improvement will usually mean that some staff, somewhere will need to be challenged to accept that change is needed – and there can be times when this process is met with resistance. So what advice should we give to a leader about to shine a light on what's not working well?

What's working?

This step is all about timing. Deciding when to meet with a colleague who has to be challenged regarding a particular issue will be pertinent as to whether the project has a successful outcome. During the meeting itself, the leader mustn't direct the conversation in a way that leaves the member of staff feeling chastised or berated.

Focusing in on what's working well could be a good way of initiating the conversation, but always remember – you're not exclusively looking to assign fault or apportion blame. This is merely an opportunity for you to hold a professional and reflective conversation with colleagues about what you, as a school, could be doing better.

The planning process gives rise to the development and predicted impact of the project agreed on by the mentee and mentors. Having used a forensic approach to planning, by looking inward, outward and forwards a project leader can begin to network and build a team who can contribute to, and implement the action plan.

To lead, support and challenge, this team will be the foundation of all leadership skills developed throughout the course of the project.

Which brings us to the essence of this article – commitment over compliance.

Find your goalscorers

I suspect that all of us have experienced the member of staff who signs up for a development group with little to no intention of actually adding any value, or genuinely trying to contribute to the action plan.

This individual may well show up for meetings, and duly nod at appropriate moments to conceal their lack of authentic endeavour. Yet when the time comes to roll out a specific task, they suddenly become very difficult to track down, to the point where they seem to vanish into thin air – at least for the purposes of my CPD records...

Worse still is when school operates a mandated approach, whereby all staff are expected to be part of one development group or another. In this instance, our difficult member of staff will likely comply with the demand, but still offer very little in return.

As a project leader, it's therefore important to quickly identify who will be most effective at securing gains for your team. After all, it's better to give the ball to the person who stands a good chance of actually scoring, than simply allocating responsibilities based on members' titles or perceived 'status'.

Building great teams ultimately means selecting great people – but guess what? Great people are only attracted to great leaders. This means that leaders need to deliver on their vision, purpose and aims, if they want to attract people who can in turn deliver on the tasks they're charged with. Also, be aware that when someone agrees 100% with a given project's aims and values, that's when you get truly unshakable commitment that outperforms compliance every time...

Collective efficacy

In my experience, good leaders have the ability to build trust in their followers. They promote self-belief, and will encourage individual team members to contribute to the collective efficacy of the team as a whole.

When each member understands the specific role they have to play and feels a healthy sense of accountability, those ambitious plans can quickly turn actions that have visible impact.

By the time a project is in full flow the leader should be fairly hands off, and only called upon when inexperience or unexpected barriers present themselves.

An outstanding leader will have all the mentoring, coaching and collaboration skills to re-empower the team member, identify what the problem might be, and play a part in finding a to the solution.

Great leaders equal great teams – and great teams equal great outcomes.

CASE STUDY – 3CT PLANNING

- Teacher X has taken up an opportunity to develop her leadership skills and embark on a new project. Her area of focus is on improving the school's induction programme, since it's been expressed that new staff feel 'unsupported' during their first few weeks.
- An initial meeting is held with a mentor, who will later become the main source of ongoing support and point of contact for sharing ideas, addressing concerns and enabling solution-focused conversations.
- The project then continues, with members using a 3CT ('Collaborative', 'Critical' and 'Creative Thinking') planning tool to break down key questions and identify priority areas to focus on.

Download a 3CT planning tool used by Ed and his colleagues with accompanying notes via bit.ly/tw126-build-lead

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher at a Scottish secondary school, having worked in education for 15 years and held teaching roles at schools in Northern Ireland and England

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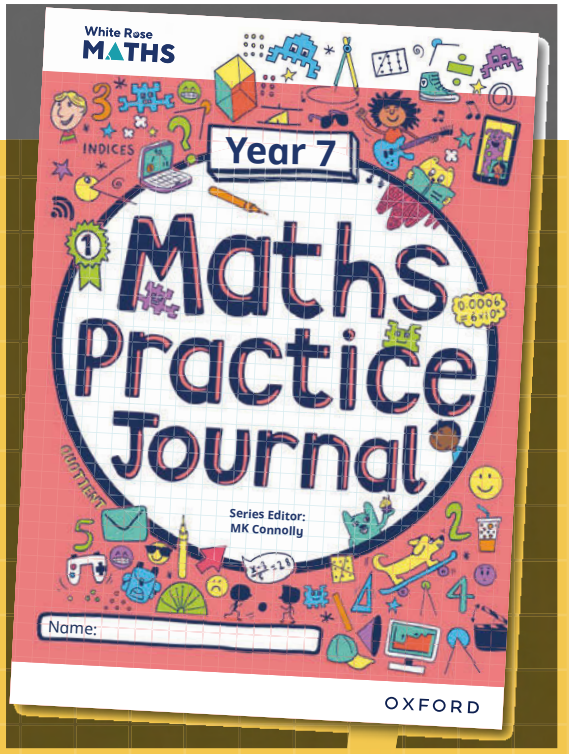

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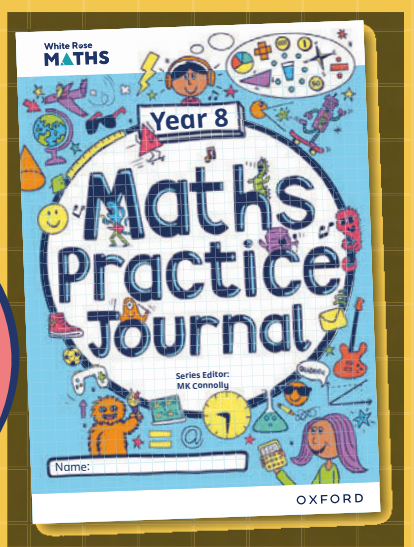

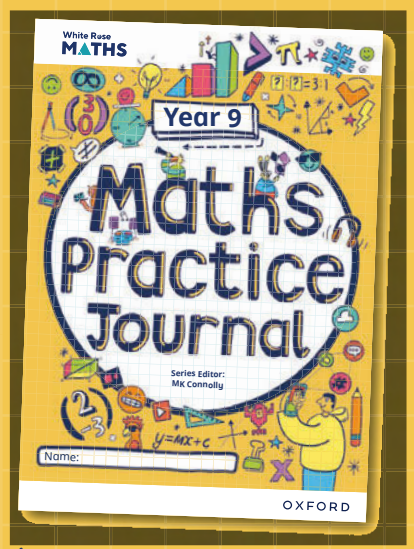

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REASONS TO TRY...

5 White Rose Maths Practice Journals

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30 SECOND BRIEFING

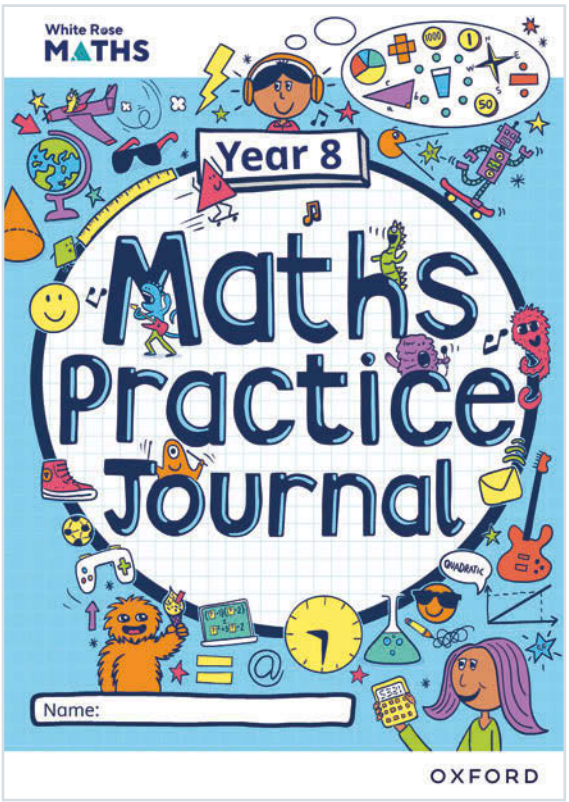
From trusted publishers White Rose Education and Oxford University Press, these brand new Maths Practice Journals provide homework matched to the White Rose Maths scheme of learning. The series offers a quick, affordable and simple way to set up a maths homework policy for Years 7 to 9.

1 ENSURE CONSISTENCY

Written by White Rose authors, the Maths Practice Journals are aligned to the White Rose Maths scheme of learning. This allows for complete fidelity to the scheme, and helps build consistency in your classroom. The White Rose team grouped together the small steps into weeks, based upon their knowledge of the scheme and how teachers use it. There are typically 3 to 4 small steps for each week's homework, with each activity matched to the teaching taking place in the classroom that week.

2 REDUCE WORKLOAD

The Maths Practice Journals take away the stressful task of finding or creating homework to match your White Rose teaching. You can rest assured that your students will be completing relevant, engaging and meaningful homework that is fully in line with the latest EEF recommendations. The activities will encourage your students to engage with and complete their homework – building a learning environment of 'keep up', rather than 'catch up'.



3 DEVELOP METACOGNITION

With 'Let's remember' activities recalling previous homework tasks, end-of-section self-reflection questionnaires and end-of-term self-assessment tasks, reflective learning and metacognition are at the heart of the Maths Practice Journals for Key Stage 3. This focus on reflection allows for effective consolidation of learning, and raises attainment by giving students time to practise and embed their understanding of that week's key concepts. It also lets students identify the next steps in their learning, or where they might need further support.

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4 USE THE MATERIAL YOUR WAY

The Maths Practice Journals can be used flexibly to suit individual schools, teachers and students. You can choose to assign certain questions for homework, and can work through the book in a different order if you wish. The books can be used at home too, with the questions being easy to access for both students and parents, while requiring minimal equipment.

5 COMPETITIVELY PRICED

Costing as little as £4.20 per homework book, our new Maths Practice Journals are an inexpensive and affordable option that will make the most of your budget. Available in packs – including a Key Stage 3 Easy Buy Pack – they are a quick and simple maths homework solution for Years 7 to 9.

Key Points

Topic-specific 'key word' boxes help to build students' vocabulary in the maths classroom and beyond

The homework activities are relevant, engaging and meaningful, and fully in line with the latest EEF recommendations

Reflective learning and metacognition are at the heart of the Maths Practice Journals, allowing for effective consolidation of learning and raising of students' attainment

Useful for learners and parents, each topic begins with a knowledge organiser featuring key vocabulary and examples of how the maths is taught

We need to talk ABOUT YEAR 10...

They're comfortable in school, but almost to a fault – and things are about to get much harder for them. **Daniel Harvey** explores why teaching students in their fourth year of school can be so tricky...

The ice cream vans have stopped coming, the rain has in all likelihood continued and the time has come to start shopping for new uniforms and stationery. September is upon us, and a new term is about to begin.

For some students, this process will involve a graduation, of sorts – from the relatively carefree comforts of KS3, to the challenges of KS4 as they embark on the study of specific subjects they've chosen to pursue.

However, with the dawning of Y10 you'll likely as not find that these earnest, cherubic and hardworking Y9 students undergo a transformation into becoming problematic Y10s – forever sneaking around, vaping in the loos and loving life, as the Sauron-like gaze of middle and senior leaders remains firmly fixed on addressing the needs and issues of Y11.

Continuity benefits

There is no doubt that for some schools and teachers, problems and issues tend to stack up in Y10 – to the extent that the start of Y11 can see the hasty implementation of reactive strategies and plans to 'save the year group *and their results*.'

But what if we've been looking at this all wrong and instead try to see it as a great opportunity? Y10 students should have benefited from their school's investment in a well-planned and rounded curriculum – one that develops knowledge around essential concepts, before augmenting them with important hinterland knowledge.

Your students should be fully at ease with the school's culture, to the point that there are no longer any surprises, and they readily understand the expectations and standards being placed upon them.

Y10 can actually be somewhat similar to Y8, in that a number of middle leaders like to use new or less experienced staff with both year groups, and place their more effective colleagues on exam duties in Y11, Y12 and Y13. This seems to stem from a belief that there will be less pressure when working with Y8 and Y10, and that running their classrooms will somehow be easier.

However, Y10 is crucially different from Y8 in that the former is – or at least should be – the start of a journey leading to the successful award of a level 2 qualification, whether GCSE or vocational. That journey will last two years, and unlike Y8, it's commonplace for teachers to continue teaching the same students as they advance to their next year group.

The Y10 to Y11 transition gives teachers a chance to build solid working relationships with their classes so that you, as their teacher, know exactly what's needed and necessary for your students to be at their very best in the summer of Y11. Ideally, we want students to be confident when sitting those exams, safe in the knowledge that they couldn't have done anything more to prepare.

Waning positivity

As is often the case in schools, things only start to become problematic in this area as a result of poorly set out processes and systems and/or poor implementation and monitoring, leading to unintended consequences. To prevent such issues occurring further down the road, there must be some robust discourse surrounding students' progression and a degree of objective awareness as to how well your initiatives are working.

I've been in plenty of SLT subject meetings where, at the start of the year, virtually everyone is

reporting how well Y10 are doing – only for that initial positivity to steadily wane over the coming months in the face of assessment and reporting pressures. Before long, there are whispers betraying concern over Y10's collective work ethic (something never previously remarked upon when the same students were in Y7, Y8 or Y9), their ability (which similarly didn't warrant any mention during their KS3 assessment process) and the 'unattainable' target grades these students have been set.

Yet it's possible for schools to avoid this, and indeed many do. How? By making several key strategic decisions, and carefully implementing these at subject and classroom level. Crucially, these decisions are bound together by effective middle leadership and line management – by which I don't mean a big brother, 'SLT-knows-best' approach.

Successful schools are very clear as to what they're going report on during Y10, and what they plan to discuss in line management and subject team meetings. This reporting can either focus on inferring grades from planned and periodic assessment, or on how well students have coped with the course and work so far – presenting assessments as simple percentages, and providing students with clearly defined areas to work on.

Too many inferences

As detailed by Daisy Chistodoulou in her groundbreaking work *Making Good Progress?*, staff must confront the difficulties of reliably sampling what knowledge is to be tested in a given assessment, the most appropriate format for that assessment, and how students should be best prepared for the particular forms of exam assessment they will eventually face.

"Successful schools are very clear as to what they're going report on during Y10, and what they plan to discuss in meetings"

A good question for schools and subject teams to ask themselves is when Y10 students should receive their first GCSE or vocational-level grade. As a science teacher who has taught for 31 years, there have been times in my experience when a Y10 Christmas test or assessment has been used to calculate grades, which are then shown to demonstrate the progress being made to parents or SLT. This grading process is subsequently viewed as 100% reliable and accurate by SLT, which means that numerous inferences are then made from that data set.

The most important thing I took from the book was the danger of making too many inferences from a set of assessment marks. For example, even the seemingly 'simple' task of turning initial assessment marks into grades should be considered potentially risky and unhelpful in the medium term.

Successful schools and subject teams will prevent this from becoming an issue by having knowledgeable and well-informed staff teach a detailed planned curriculum. The curriculum plan they use will contain not just the obvious course basics, but also examples of expert curriculum knowledge passed from experienced team members to colleagues, so that all classes and students can benefit from this work.

School assessment design should also reflect different aspects of the planned and taught curriculum, known as *procedural knowledge*, *disciplinary knowledge* and *substantive knowledge*. How will your school's assessment reflect these different aspects? And how can your students effectively prepare?

These curriculum plans will be regularly updated, and most importantly, *regularly discussed*, so that all colleagues are clear as to how they ought to be implemented. This can help tease out the tricky nuances of certain exam questions.

A well-planned assessment will accurately reflect where students are at in the course, what they *should* know versus what they *do* know, and what staff must cover if the students are to be successful.

By focusing on staff expertise, and enabling staff to build effective classroom relationships, your students can leave Y10 knowing that their teacher has fully prepared them to the best of their ability, and take that confidence with them into Y11 and beyond.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture at an inner city academy


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A questionable agency

How much independence and freedom to set their own agenda does Ofsted's chief actually have? It depends who and when you're asking, says **Adrian Lyons**...

During my 16+ years as an HMI in Ofsted I served a series of chief inspectors – Sir David Bell, Dame Christine Gilbert, Sir Michael Wilshaw and Amanda Spielman – each of whom set a different course.

Since all Ofsted employees are ultimately civil servants carrying out the wishes of His Majesty's Chief Inspector, it's accurate to state that HMCIs set Ofsted's overall direction and framework. In terms of its independence, Ofsted ostensibly operates at arm's length from the government of the day, and is intended to act as an independent inspectorate.

Key restraints

Ultimately, however, Ofsted is still accountable to the government, and has to contend with two key restraints on its independence:

1. Ofsted receives its funding from the DfE

2. The HMCI is appointed by the government

One former HMCI recently recounted to me how he'd fallen out with the then Secretary of State. Not long after this, it also happened that Ofsted's funding was cut. That former chief inspector went on to tell me that the answer to the question of 'How independent is an HMCI'? is that '*They can be as independent as they want to be, if they are willing to face the consequences*.'

When, as Education Secretary, Michael Gove pushed hard for large numbers of schools to

transfer from LA control to MATs, then-HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw expressed concerns about inconsistencies in the quality of education across academies, and the need for stronger oversight. This position was seen by some – notably Gove's chief advisor, Dominic Cummings – as undermining Government policy.

In October 2014, an internal DfE memo from Cummings, which was strongly critical of Wilshaw, was leaked to *The Guardian*. Soon afterwards, Wilshaw told the paper, "I will not allow Ofsted to be politicised, and I will not be swayed from making the difficult decisions that are sometimes necessary to raise standards in our country. Nor will I be deterred from shining a spotlight on poor performance, whether in academy chains, free schools or local authority schools, no matter how uncomfortable this may be for some people." (see bit.ly/ts126-AL1)

Too many battles

Two years later, I was commissioned by Sir Michael Wilshaw to carry out research and produce a report about how schools help pupils get ready for the world of work, with a particular focus on pupils who struggled with this via the academic route.

Given Ministers' preference at the time for an EBacc-focussed curriculum, this was shaping up to be another opportunity for Ofsted to assert its independence. My subsequent 'Getting Ready for Work' report (see bit.ly/ts126-AL2) was published the month before Wilshaw's term of office was due to end.

Before publication, however, I received a phone call from an Ofsted official. After acknowledging what Sir Michael had asked me to do, they went on to inform me that the message of the report had needed to be 'toned down', owing to the number of conflicts we'd recently had with the DfE.

Preferred approach

One can therefore surmise that a key requirement for Wilshaw's successor was to be more in tune with government policy. On the face of it, at least, the current incumbent has certainly met that remit, making Ofsted effectively the enforcement arm of the government's preferred knowledge-rich, EBacc-focussed curriculum.

It's worth remembering how the BBC reported back in in July 2016 that, "MPs have rejected the government's choice for the next head of Ofsted, saying they have 'significant concerns' about her suitability for the job. Amanda Spielman, who has no teaching experience, failed to show 'passion' or an understanding of the 'complex role', education select committee MPs said." (bbc.in/43sBrQc)

Perhaps the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, was working to a different set of essential attributes...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Adrian Lyons was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors between 2005 and 2021 and now works with MATs, teacher training providers and LAs to support education; find out more at adrianlyonsconsulting.com

Isolation and INTEGRATION

Helen Davies examines how a combination of purposeful one-to-ones and careful differentiation can help children with SEND to be fully included in class

There was a time when isolation used to be seen as a last resort. In many an overcrowded classroom, pupils seen as 'disruptive', or who were known to struggle with controlling their behaviour would be quickly separated from their classmates and provided with extra help in a quieter learning environment.

Yet while this may have indeed been the most supportive action in some cases, in others, the young person concerned might well feel that they were being excluded for actions beyond their control.

In and of itself, isolation isn't necessarily a 'negative' option. In fact, it can be usefully deployed in a number of ways – as a key strategy in a reintegration process, for example. It can give pupils an opportunity to calm down, focus their behaviour and/or self-regulate in a safe space. Some students with SEND can find larger classrooms environments overwhelming, particularly if they're struggling to keep up or are dealing with other issues.

Building rapport

Yet while isolation can be productively used to improve outcomes, prolonged isolation periods in which young people are kept away from their peers can have negative effects. These include the creation of anxiety around social environments, as well as withdrawal symptoms or other issues that can negate their ability to engage with friends and family.

For teachers and teaching assistants, isolation periods should be used to assess pupils' needs and understand the reasons for their behaviour so that appropriate action can be taken. The teacher or TA firstly needs to build a rapport with the young person if they're to communicate clearly, earn the young person's acceptance and accurately convey the expectations being placed upon them.

It is important that you maintain physical space between the student and yourself, as this process can feel overwhelming for them. When the student is back in class alongside their peers, circulate to support everyone, but also allow the student to use their own resources and not become dependent on your attention – perhaps by giving them tools such as 'brain breaks' and arranging sensory games with clear boundaries and expectations.

Observe how the young person is interacting with others. If there is low level disruption, such as pen tapping, are they making noises to help them focus? Write things down to build up a picture of how you can best support the student – perhaps by recording and reporting their likes, dislikes, triggers and any other observations.

Seeing the patterns

We know of one situation in which a pupil was struggling in their interactions with others, was very overstimulated and would often be misunderstood by his peers and staff. He had a tendency to display aggressive behaviours, sometimes flipping tables out of frustration at not being able to keep up with his classmates.

The TA's priority was to build a good rapport with him, understand his boundaries and recognise his triggers. Together, they worked harmoniously to help him self-regulate – a vital learning tool – and adapted the topics being covered in his Y10 class to a more accessible Y7 level. This enabled him to feel more included and better able to follow what was being taught to his classmates.

The TA also learned to recognise his patterns of behaviour. As breaktimes and lunchtimes drew near, he would often escalate his behaviours by way of a coping mechanism, stemming from his struggles to communicate with his peers. To help address this, the TA also encouraged the student to play alongside his classmates using a combination of sharing, turn-taking and team games, especially football.

Setting boundaries

Isolating a young person can sometimes have an adverse effect by further escalating behaviours and crisis moments. In response, a TA could instead opt to sit with

"Think of isolation as a support system, rather than the end goal"

students at the back of the classroom, where they'll be better placed to quietly contain any disruptive behaviour and provide helpful additional support.

Some pupils with SEND may be bothered by noise levels, which can make for challenging re-integrations into the classroom. If that's the case, think about the space and whether it's fit for learning *for everyone*.

Making all pupils feel like part of the class, and facilitating social interactions between them and their classmates is vital. You don't want those pupils experiencing difficulties to feel like outcasts.

Where possible, encourage social games and share talk about feelings and emotions, since not socialising and feeling excluded will only create further barriers to learning.

You want every young person to feel secure in their environment and – especially where those with SEND are concerned – develop self esteem and confidence in social settings, as well as in their academic learning.

Set boundaries early on with a praise and reward system, giving each individual quick wins that show progress. A visual timetable, setting out every day so that they know what activities and tasks they will be doing, can also greatly help a young person to self-regulate.

Progress and pride

PE lessons can be a great way of relieving stress and encouraging play and interaction between peers. If the young person has physical disabilities, set up games for them to play with their friends so that they feel included. Physical disabilities should never be a barrier to physical health and sport engagement.

Organise regular handovers with the young student's parents/carers and regularly update them on the reasonable and achievable targets you've set for their child. Wherever possible, help them to feel proud of the progress their child is making.

Also ask about their child's behaviours at home. Is there anything that you need to be aware of that could impact upon their day?

Disruptive behaviour is often an expression of frustration at not being able to communicate what one is thinking and feeling. Using a PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) will support children who are non-verbal, or who have selective mute communication, and can help to keep them engaged.

It's vital that young people get to be heard, so try to provide as many forms of alternative or visual communication as you can, while being mindful of any additional training that your SEND staff may require, such as British Sign Language signing.

HANDOVER MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

- A record of the pupil's activity throughout the day, which could identify potential triggers.
- What has gone well? Have they been engaged in their learning, and if so, why?
- Encourage parents/carers to communicate potential issues that may impact upon their child's learning.
- Celebrate any achievements and progress, however small these may seem.

Exploring the avenues

Tasks such as taking care of a pet or plant can engender a sense of responsibility in a child with SEND, while helping them better regulate their own emotions and feelings. Baking can also be an absorbing way to engage a young person, who may well delight in eating something they've created themselves, and subsequently experience an enormous sense of pride in their work.

Above all, think of isolation as a support system rather than the end goal. You want the young person back in their classroom with the other pupils as quickly as possible. In some extreme cases, exclusion may be the only option to protect the teacher and classmates – but hopefully there are many other avenues you can explore first, before having to take this last resort.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Helen Davies is Northern Area Manager and head of SEND at the education recruitment specialist Simply Education

For more information, visit simplyeducation.co.uk

Tired teachers CAN'T TEACH

Heard the one about the teacher who was worked to the bone and couldn't perform their job properly? Almost certainly, and therein lies the problem, writes **Matt MacGuire**...

Teachers should teach. They should, to quote David Didau, '*Make kids cleverer*'.

Their job is to ensure the learners in their charge build the knowledge and skills associated with their subject area. The best learning happens in the classroom, under the supervision of the subject expert, who is able to carefully build students' schemata.

Match-ready

For this to happen, however, the teacher needs to be energised, enthusiastic, positive and alert. The teacher must be able to circulate ceaselessly, have eyes on every student, explain with clarity and concision, and repeat and rephrase as often as necessary.

The lesson is to the teacher what the 'big match' is to the sportsperson. The fighter leaves everything in the ring. The teacher leaves everything in the lesson. No athlete would overexert themselves in training the night before a big game, because that would obviously diminish their performance when it counts.

And yet, far too often, teachers will do *far too much work* the night before their own 'big game'. When every evening entails some combination of marking, planning, resource preparation and/or other tasks, the teacher can never be at their best in lessons the following day.

For teachers, this other 'stuff' that doesn't directly concern classroom teaching will likely sap their mental and physical energy. An obvious example would be a long parents' evening, followed by a full day at school. Every teacher knows how much of a toll that long evening will have taken, and how their lessons the following day likely won't be quite as good as they might have been.

Unnecessary anxiety

There have been times in my career when I was expected to produce a full lesson plan for every lesson; to differentiate every lesson at three different levels; to produce multiple versions of every lesson resource.

By the time I got to actually teaching those lessons, I'd be too exhausted to do a good job, having spent the night before absorbing subject knowledge, creating resources and planning. When mentally fatigued, I could sometimes spend 20 minutes deciding on which image would go best on a certain PowerPoint slide.

This relentless treadmill of planning, resourcing, differentiating, marking, remarking, data entry, reporting and so on very nearly drove me to leave the profession.

I'd now say that any school which still hasn't centralised its resource production, leaving it up to individual teachers instead, is *getting it wrong*. There's no excuse for it. It doesn't 'maintain teacher autonomy'; it hamstrings teachers with unnecessary anxiety and workload.

Privacy settings

Be aware that *the* most valuable and expensive resource in the classroom is the teacher – and that this teacher has to be well-rested and in good physical and mental condition if they're to perform at their best.

Everything that leaders ask teachers to do outside their core purpose of teaching will only serve to detract from the effectiveness of that teaching. In the most extreme cases, extraneous workloads can make teachers feel perpetually tired and miserable within the profession, or else drive them out of it altogether.

> **"You deserve the same work-life balance as everyone else in the country"**

If you're in a school where you have to produce your own resources, complete hours of traditional exercise book marking or complete more than three data drops per class per year... *leave*. Your school's SLT is misguided and out of touch.

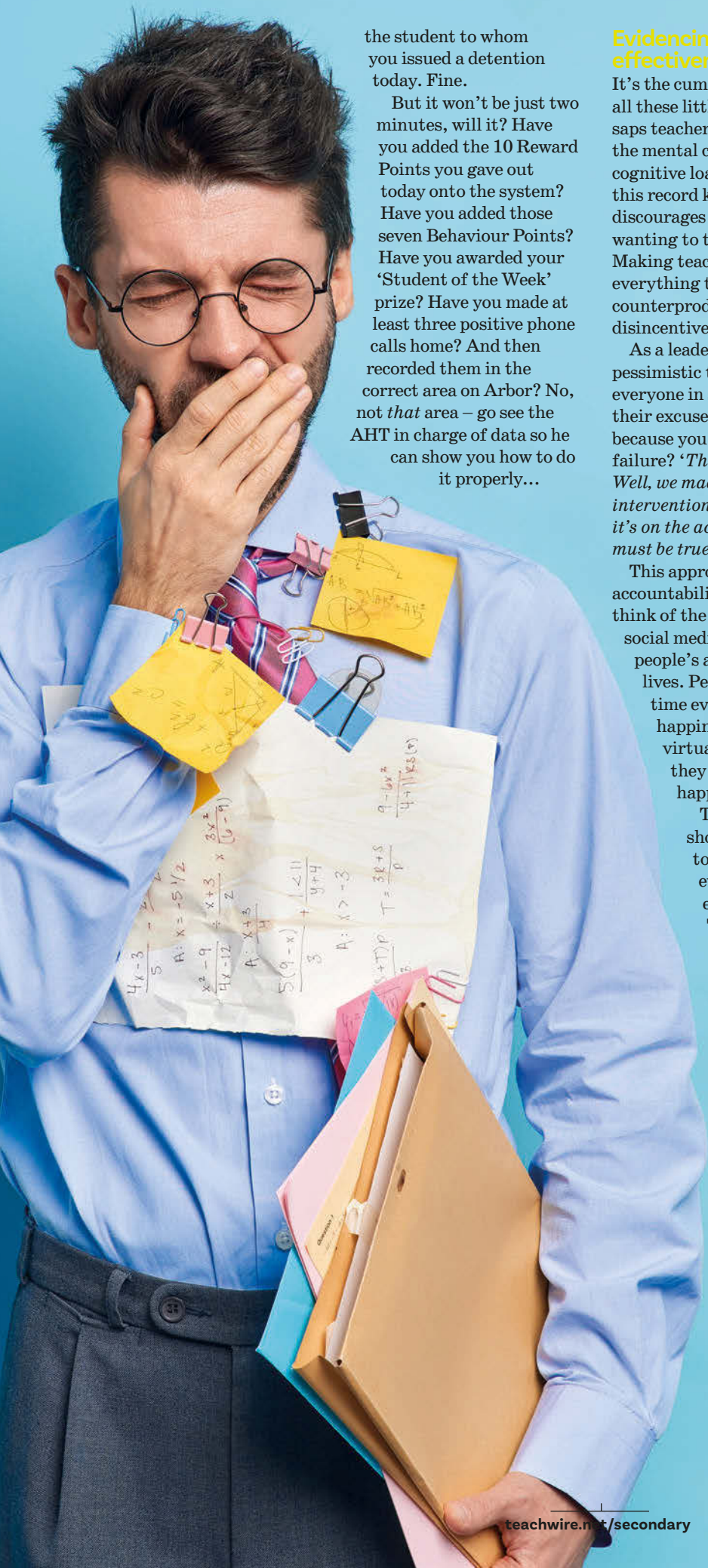
As a teacher, you deserve the same work-life balance as everyone else in the country. I still meet teachers who take home shopping bags full of exercise books after a full day's work. Leadership teams who do nothing to prevent this are, in my view, failing in their duty of care to their staff.

Two-minute warning

Teachers don't need to be martyrs willing to sacrifice their family time, leisure time, sleep and mental wellbeing in order to educate students properly. It's quality first teaching that really makes the difference – and definitely not traditional marking. Assessment for learning has its place, but one doesn't fatten the pig by endlessly weighing it.

If you are a school leader, take workload seriously. Remind yourself of how you felt as a main scale teacher teaching a full timetable. Consider the impact when you next add an extra responsibility and explain in a staff briefing that '*It only takes two minutes*'.

Know that eyes roll whenever this absurd phrase is used. It may well take 'only two minutes' to click through the relevant sub-menus of SIMS, Arbor or whatever software you're using at your school and add a note saying that you've made a call home regarding



the student to whom you issued a detention today. Fine.

But it won't be just two minutes, will it? Have you added the 10 Reward Points you gave out today onto the system? Have you added those seven Behaviour Points? Have you awarded your 'Student of the Week' prize? Have you made at least three positive phone calls home? And then recorded them in the correct area on Arbor? No, not *that* area – go see the AHT in charge of data so he can show you how to do it properly…

Evidencing effectiveness

It's the cumulative nature of all these little routines that saps teachers' energy. It's the mental clutter, the cognitive load created by all this record keeping that discourages teachers from wanting to take action. Making teachers record everything they do is a counterproductive disincentive.

As a leader, are you so pessimistic that you want everyone in school to get their excuses in order because you anticipate failure? '*This student failed? Well, we made them go to 17 intervention sessions – look, it's on the action log, so it must be true…*'

This approach to accountability makes me think of the terrible impact social media has had on people's actual social lives. People spend more time evidencing their happiness on their virtual timelines than they spend being happy in reality.

Teachers shouldn't be forced to spend time evidencing their effectiveness. They should be allowed (and trusted) to use their time efficiently. They'll have far more time, energy and inclination to work with students if they're not perpetually recording every step they take and every move they make.

FOLLY IN ACTION

I once worked under an assistant headteacher who required everyone to complete an action log for each Y11 student – an additional spreadsheet for recording all actions take and every aspect of support and intervention.

The purpose of this was to '*Provide written evidence that we had done everything we could.*' In anticipation of failure, we were being asked to have our excuses ready. The stupidity and cowardice of this task left me stupefied.

One day, in the English office I had the chance to ask him, "*How long will it take me to clear this desk?*" It was messy, littered with marking, dirty plates, coffee mugs and pens. Bemused, he suggested a couple of minutes.

So I tested his assertion. I moved one coffee cup to the sink, then went to the whiteboard and wrote '*Moved coffee cup to sink.*' I then placed a pile of marking into a pigeonhole, returned to the whiteboard and wrote '*Put marking into pigeonhole*'.

He understood my point, but duly ignored it. As the American economist Thomas Sowell once remarked, "*It is so easy to be wrong – and to persist in being wrong – when the costs of being wrong are paid by others…*"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Matt MacGuire (@MacGrammar) is an assistant headteacher; this article is based on a post originally published at his blog, Ten Rules for Teaching (tenrulesforteaching.com)

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FOCUS ON: ENGLISH

Students can dismiss English as being 'just' about reading and writing – but as we hope to show this issue, the subject's sheer breadth allows plenty of scope for discoverability, surprises and emotional moments...

What strategies can we use to get students more engaged and enthused in English lessons?

THE AGENDA:

Bibliophobes TO BIBLIOPHILES

Meera Chudasama looks at how you can turn reading-averse students into avid bookworms desperate to see what the next page holds...

"*The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.*"

– Dr Seuss

Having started the last academic year with a supported set, I saw for myself how some would drag their feet in English lessons while others had a distinct spring in their step. Even more obvious was how the 10 minutes of silent reading we did at the start of the lesson would be accompanied by various moans and groans.

The class TA and I therefore decided to investigate the relationship these Y7 students actually had with reading. We reasoned that it was the teacher's responsibility to, as Rosenblatt put it, "*Foster fruitful interactions – or more precisely, transactions – between individual readers and individual literary works.*"

The targets we set were therefore as follows:

- Help students find books they could engage with
- Challenge students' reading abilities
- Try a range of different reading strategies
- Utilise multimedia platforms for source material

Library Lessons

Our fortnightly library lessons already afforded students the time to read independently, be quizzed on Accelerated Reader (AR) tests and exchange or return any borrowed books. After observing Y7 during these library lessons, I discovered that reading to them was either a chore they needed to drag themselves through, or an activity they already knew how to do and didn't need to get any better at.

Given that their reading diets stretched from Jeff Kinney's *Wimpy Kid* series to as far as *Goosebumps* but barely any further, it was a class that had a real resistance to anything one could describe as 'challenging reads' – and all the engaging and enthralling experiences that might follow. My mission was set. I was ready.

Taking into consideration each student's emotional attachments to reading, any habitual reading practices and SEND details, where applicable, I wanted to ensure our students could feel supported and secure ahead of their reading adventure.

Change 1 was to introduce weekly library lessons that would include the following:

- Kindle-based reading in small groups, guided by myself or the TA
- One-to-one reading with either myself or the TA
- Playing 'Dungeons & Dragons' as a class, guided by the school librarian
- 'Book Buzz' events led by students' own book selections
- Class discussions about specific books

For many students in this particular class, the word 'reading' effectively referred to an overwhelming challenge of having to decode and comprehend, while simultaneously understanding and connecting with various characters, ideas and narratives. In many ways, it was an uphill battle.

"The word 'reading' referred to an overwhelming challenge of having to decode and comprehend"

Nevertheless, we persisted. After the AR quizzes were taken, we supported and guided students through the process of choosing the best books for them – one they could borrow for pleasure, and another that would appropriately challenge their reading level.

Revolutionary access

The library soon became our hub for learning about how be creative, how to navigate books better, and how authors wrote in different contexts. With our significant (and growing) proportion of children with English as a second language, it wasn't surprising to see one particular addition to the library being welcomed with open arms – our use of the ePlatform ebooks distribution service (eplatform.co).

This is a website with a supporting app that's accessible to students both in school and at home. It enabled our students to access literature in English and many other languages, in a range of different fonts and display options or as audiobooks. The students were able to change the settings to suit their particular reading needs, try samples of books that interested them and have books read to them out loud.

ePlatform proved to be revolutionary in how our Y7 accessed literature thereafter. After just one lesson, we soon had students reading works written in Tamil, Swedish and Russian. Before long, the reading for pleasure we were striving towards wasn't just being encouraged by us teachers, but actually coming from the students themselves.

That's because our students were learning just how enjoyable reading could be, and were rapidly growing in their curiosity. For them, the act of reading had became an habitual community practice. Subsequent parents' evenings allowed me to consolidate the reading students were doing in the classroom and library with the reading they were doing alongside loved ones at home.

Reading logs

Tears, fears, cheers – our Y7 students displayed a host of emotions when we first introduced reading logs, and when we announced at the start of their second term that each student would be given spelling books.

For **Change 2** we mandated that students had to read for at least 20 minutes each day, recording the page numbers read, title of the book and any details in their books that they found especially interesting.

At first, many students in the class struggled with the challenge of reading for a total of 20 minutes, which to them felt like a lifetime. This was after the TA and I decided to up the requirement from 10 minutes a day. With this challenge set, however, myself and the TA vowed to also read 20 minutes a day ourselves, and ended up sending each other pictures of us reading!

Writing to an author

Alongside the reading log, I wanted to find ways of encouraging reading via different means and in different formats. I consulted the school librarian and decided on using a class reader from outside the curriculum with the aid of a visualiser. I wanted to show students that reading could help them empathise with characters, better express their own emotions and grow to be curious. As a class, we eventually chose to read *Seven Ghosts* by Chris Priestley.

The final lesson of the week was then dedicated to reading an additional portion of the book. I would place the copy of *Seven Ghosts* under the visualiser, and regularly stop to check what students remembered about the characters, what they felt might happen next and so on.

These questions were intended to help them develop a real connection with the book, rather than solely get them achieving a particular progression level. When it emerged that the students were unfamiliar with discussing characters, events and narratives, my aim then became one of helping them to "Explore connections between personal knowledge and the text, and to create their own understanding jointly through language." (Miller, 2016: 291)

The experience of reading *Seven Ghosts* ignited conversations in class about characters, events, imagined narrative endings and much more. After we'd finished reading it, I tweeted Chris Priestley and obtained details of how the students could write him a letter.

Some wrote alternative narrative endings; some reimagined its characters, while others simply expressed their appreciation for the book and the story. What united the letters is that they were all bursting with engagement.

This activity duly became a purposeful, real and important writing opportunity that compelled the students to draft and rewrite their letters with care and precision. It was a writing activity very different to those the students had been set previously.

This experience of reading from outside the curriculum with a follow-up writing activity reaffirmed for me the freedom that comes with teacher autonomy. I finally witnessed a level of engagement among the students that would go on to motivate and inspire them to read a breadth of books that were well outside of their natural comfort zones.

DEVELOP STRONG READERS

- Choose a class reader outside of the curriculum
- Model reading aloud – show expression, pause during tense moments, vary your tone and pace
- Talk to your school librarians and think about the ways in which they can have some input in developing your students' love for reading
- Find opportunities for students to engage directly with authors
- Use games to explore different genres and authors

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher with a passion for design and research, and has developed course content for the Charted College of Teaching

Readers can download a 30-page, ready-to=use reading log for students developed by Meera from Teachwire via the URL bit.ly/ts126-RL

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4 Future Makers

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ABOUT ME:

NAME: Gwyn ap Harri

JOB ROLE: CEO of XP School Trust

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These are academically rigorous, cross-subject projects where at the end of each project, students will make something tangible that can be shared.

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Learning mechanics

Sometimes, the key to getting past students' reluctance to study English is to impress upon them that it can be dismantled and reassembled like a mechanism

Some years ago I was asked to assist a young adult, Ben, who had fared poorly in his English studies at school. He boasted to me that he had been thrown out of every school in the local area, but now had responsibilities at work that required him to regularly read and to write reports.

Once I'd gained his trust, I explained to him how I'd previously learned how a car engine worked simply by dismantling and then reassembling it. This, I assured him, is how we would proceed with our English studies.

Soon afterwards, I was joined by a troubled school refuser, also called Ben, whom I was able to engage with a new textbook I was writing at the time (My first having been *IGCSE English – First Language*, commissioned by Heinemann).

As this second book took shape, I'd write sections and test them with 'Big Ben'. One of 'Little Ben's chores, meanwhile, was to write a single-sentence opinion on each page of the book's first draft. He relished this challenge of commenting upon the work of an adult.

Clarity is crucial

The English language is far more than 'just' a school subject. It's the means by which we show and communicate our understanding of everything around us, in other school subjects and beyond. Summary skills enable us to extract the main points from a piece of writing and convey them quickly and easily to others, which can be of great social and economic importance – in a large organisation, for example.

Studying the construction of written material helps us to order and express our ideas more effectively not just when we write, but also when we speak. Clarity in our writing and speaking naturally makes it easier for others to understand us, and besides – if we can't be bothered to write or speak clearly, why should anyone take any notice of what we have to say? Good English is part of good manners.

Then there's the importance of written records. In conversation, we can seek clarification where needed, but we obviously can't always do the same with written material, thus making it crucial that we're clear and precise with our words.

Engage, Demonstrate, Explain, Encourage

I thus explained to 'Big Ben' that we would proceed by first finding the most important word in a sentence – the verb – before examining how the other words in the sentence related to it. We would then look at how, by varying these words, we could change the effect of a sentence, be it subtly or dramatically. We then consider the sentence and varieties thereof and ways in which they can be put to work.

I detail this approach in the aforementioned book, now titled *What, How and Why: A Manual of Better English*. The book was born partly out of my concerns regarding the often poor standards of literacy I've observed in the course of tutoring school 'failures,' school refusers, parents and soldiers serving in a military prison, as well as practice I've seen within mainstream schools.

'Big Ben' is now completing a part-time engineering degree, while 'Little Ben' is busy coping with life. I'm reminded of another young gent who had been predicted a U grade for his GCSE English, but after working through the first six chapters of the book with him over six lessons, he passed with a C. He's now studying towards a Master's degree in computing.

Common to my approach with these students and the many others I've worked with has been my personal motto – Engage, Demonstrate, Explain, Encourage.

After starting as an English teacher, I later became a headteacher, as well as an examiner for O/A level and the IB. And there's one thing I've often told my students to allay their fear of failure. And that's that I failed just one exam when I left school – English literature.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Inson is a retired headteacher and English examiner, and is now a part-time English tutor; *What, How and Why: A Manual of Better English* is available now (£9.99, The Book Guild). For more details, visit peterinson.net

Lessons in EMPATHISING

Diane Lee explains why English classrooms are the perfect venues in which to explore the nature of empathy, and how it can change the way we perceive the world...

Let me pose a question. It's one I'm sure you've been asked countless times before, but this time, I want you to give me an instant, knee-jerk answer – *why did you become a teacher?*

If your response was something like, 'imparting knowledge', then I respectfully put it to you that Google can do that too. If, however, your answer was along the lines of 'Educating for life', or 'Helping someone realise and fulfil their potential', then, in my opinion at least, you're closer to what I believe an educator's role in a young person's life should be.

We can assist young people in many different ways beyond academia – by helping them become more emotionally literate, competent and compassionate, for example. Sharing your own gut-wrenching stories of unfairness or injustice and encouraging them to do the same; calling upon, and then tapping their into feelings, emotions and experiences.

In an English classroom, via the discussions you have, the texts you read, the creative writing tasks you set and classroom activities you organise, your lessons can develop children and young people in more ways than you or they might imagine...

Avoid the danger zone

What books are you reading with your class? The same titles as always? It's understandable – not all schools have the luxury of changing their curriculum, sometimes due to lack of budget or resourcing, and there can be a reluctance to let go of the familiar.

The problem is that familiarity can feel comforting, but will also present you with a danger zone. Teaching the same text year in, year out can dull your senses to the different ways of seeing and teaching its themes, context, plot, events and character nuances. Believe me, I've been there – but it is possible to approach every text, even the most well-worn, from a fresh vantage point.

Presenting an old text through a new lens – studying Shakespeare with the aid of modern adaptations, or studying texts critically by looking at characters through an intersectional lens, for example – can give way to a richer learning experience, leaving you and your class with a more compassionate view of the characters and perhaps the text as a whole.

> **"It is possible to approach every text, even the most well-worn, from a fresh vantage point"**

Greater compassion

Conversely, if you're able to make the switch and select different texts altogether, then go for it! We're fortunate to be part of the Lit in Colour programme (litincolour.penguin.co.uk), through which we receive free set texts by writers of colour, allowing us to retire a long-taught GCSE text in favour of a fresh, more relatable story.

We recently chose *Refugee Boy* – the stage adaptation by Lemn Sissay, based on the novel by Benjamin Zephaniah. In a predominantly white student population school in Suffolk, making this change was not only important to us, but allowed us to introduce our students to a text in which the protagonist has been treated unfairly.

Did our students more readily identify with the unfair treatment portrayed because it resonated and connected with their own experiences? The answer was an emphatic and resounding, 'Yes!'

This change in text has also fostered greater compassion in many other areas. While being taught the context alongside the text, my class watched a powerful video on the refugee experience, and another on 'What they took

with them' – a televised adaptation of a poem with its lines read by famous actors.

This led to a discussion about what the students had seen, and what they would take with them if they had to leave their home suddenly to flee persecution, conflict or war. From there, we proceeded to an imaginative writing activity in which they wrote about the setting, the possessions they would take with them and why. I can honestly say that what my Y10s wrote that day well and truly exemplified what's now expressed in modern parlance as, 'They understood the assignment.'

Universal similarities

It's noted in the CLPE's 2020 'Reflecting Realities' report on ethnic representation within UK children's literature (see bit.ly/ts126-EE1) that, ''As human beings, there are some key universal similarities that bind us, but also key distinctions in our lived experiences. A book can serve as a stimulus for exploring points of difference; providing recognition and affirmation for readers who can identify, and provide invaluable insight for those who may not."

Walking my students through learning opportunities, actively encouraging them to put themselves in the place of a character they are studying is vital. And yet, not once have I used the word empathy in this article, until now [*the standfirst intro doesn't count, we write that bit – Ed*]. Why is that?

It's because successfully teaching and creating moments that develop students' empathic skills is about so much more than explicitly stating that that's what you're doing.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "No one will care how much you know until they know how much you care." As an educator who desires to prepare their students to be global citizens, I'd maintain that you should model the type of caring, compassionate and empathetic behaviours you wish to see in your students.

The empathy baton

As you pass this invisible 'empathy baton' on to your students, they will in turn grab it with both hands and proceed to run their own race, as per the path laid out before them. Their run, or their lives, will stretch out far beyond your classroom, and hopefully see them eventually pass that same baton on to those who come afterwards, only for it to be passed on again.

Never forget – you are the curator of your class's compassion and comprehension, and the empathy barometer of another's person's reality and lived experience. To help you perform that role successfully, you're in the powerful position of being able to invite your students to metaphorically and literally share a table with others who may not look like them, or share similar life experiences. You can do this every time you introduce them to characters who aren't like them.

True inclusion sees to it that this is a table at which everyone can be seated, since you're demonstrating that you want each individual to feel as though they're welcome and that they belong. As one of the characters in the 1993 film *Shadowlands* puts it, 'We read to know we are not alone.' To which I would only add, 'We are not alone when we truly feel as though we belong.'

We see appeals for equality, diversity and inclusion everywhere – but I put it to you that it isn't some passing trend, but an urgent challenge which which can produce a great deal of good. As Stormzy once remarked, "I encourage everyone... to not just use diversity as a buzzword – whatever position you're in, whatever role you play, be a driving factor for it, and [don't] just see it as a quota, or a box to tick."

WHAT'S WORKED FOR ME

- Teach a diverse text that students can connect with and which provides topical content, such as *Refugee Boy* – or at least examine more traditional texts through a different lens
- Be willing to sit with discomfort, on the understanding that some students may be sitting in discomfort beneath your very gaze
- Have uncomfortable and vulnerable conversations with colleagues about what you know, what you don't know and what you need to learn
- Commit to meaningful CPD that can help you become more insightful
- If working with children who are forcibly displaced, or children who have experienced trauma, try the 'Healing Classroom' approach – a free course of trauma-informed training delivered by the International Rescue Committee (see bit.ly/ts126-EE2)
- Keep an eye out for commemoration dates, such as Windrush Day (22nd June) – but remember to not limit your activity to just those days alone...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Lee is teacher of English at Stowmarket High School, Suffolk. Pearson's Lit in Colour Pioneers Programme supports schools in developing a more diverse English Literature curriculum through enabling free access to set texts, library donations of 300 books and providing responsive training; for more details, visit go.pearson.com/litincolour

Finish this...

The English National Opera's FREE composition project for KS3.

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'A unique project that has high expectations of the students as musicians which gives them confidence. They were engaged and inspired.'

Using a fusion of opera, film and animation, **Finish This...** inspires creative composition work in your classroom; inviting your students to be ENO Composers and tasking them to respond to, and resolve, a purposefully unfinished operatic piece.

Finish This... offers a unique starting point for your students to explore musical concepts and features - through a series of practical activities and discussions that have been aligned to the KS3 music curriculum - before completing the composition task by creating their own music response to colour and text.

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The Inside Story

STEVE ODDY
denford.co.uk

Manufacturer, innovator, STEM education supporter – Denford is a company with many stories to tell. Managing Director Steve Oddy takes us through eight decades of history...

BIO: Steve Oddy is the Managing Director of Denford – a British manufacturer specialising in the production of CNC (computer numerical controlled) routers, lathes and milling machines.

[MEET THE TEAM]

Mitchel Timmins, Technical Manager
With a degree in Electrics Engineering, Mitchel leads the development of Denford machinery and software, alongside providing technical guidance to customers.

Julie Bramley, Sales Support Manager
Working within the Sales team, Julie supports Denford's UK and international customers, providing sales advice and logistics assistance.

Denford was originally incorporated in 1944, making next year a real milestone for the company. As we celebrate turning 80, it's a great opportunity to reflect on where we are, where we've been and what's on the horizon.

Many people don't realise just how far back our heritage stretches, and our history is something we're really proud of. We've evolved throughout the years to remain at the forefront of the engineering industry, and have established a reputation for manufacturing Computer Numerical Controlled (CNC) routers, lathes and milling machines that are now used in schools and colleges across the world.

But when we started out in the 1940s, the world was a different place. Most engineering was very much manual – and so were our products! In place of the Computer Aided Design (CAD) software that's ubiquitous in schools today, products then were sketched by hand and made into reality using handheld tools, rather than programmed machines.

It was in this era that our journey began. We began life supplying devices, such as metal and wood lathes, that were marketed under the Viceroy name and developed specifically for use in education. These safety-conscious products were incredibly popular, and you can still find them in some D&T workshops today - a true hallmark of Denford quality!

As the decades moved on and technology progressed, digitisation transformed the world – and engineering was no exception. Computers became an integral part of design and manufacturing processes, and Denford embraced this new development. In the 1980s we launched the first ever CNC training lathe, and soon expanded this into a range of routers and milling machines specifically aimed at the education sector, where they enabled students to design and manufacture 3D products. These machines have continued to be a core part of our product portfolio to this day.

In fact, CNC machining plays a key role in the most recent part of our story – the launch of F1 in Schools by our CEO, Andrew Denford, in 2000. A not-for-profit STEM competition that seeks to inspire and engage the next generation of engineers, it was developed to provide teachers and students alike with a fun, engaging and educational way of bringing design and manufacturing to life.

Using CAD software to design a miniature F1® car, and CNC machines to make them, pupils learn a range of valuable real-world skills, and get to see first-hand how they can be applied in the creation of a usable product.

So, while the last 80 years may have seen considerable change in the world of education and engineering (and everything else besides!), one thing has remained the same – Denford is at the heart of both.

Contact:
For more information visit **denford.co.uk** or **f1inschools.co.uk**

Our Journey

1944
Denford Engineering is officially incorporated by Horace Stanley Frederick Denford, a London-born engineer who moved to Halifax, West Yorkshire, to escape the Blitz bombing campaign during WWII.

1950s
The company gains a renowned reputation for its production of wood and metal turning lathes, which become a popular feature in Design & Technology workshops across the UK.

1980s
As technology advances, Denford embraces the digitisation of machinery and develops one of the first CNC machine ranges specifically for the education sector.

2000
Denford launches F1 in Schools. Now running in 60 countries, the competition has since expanded to incorporate modules on Project Management, Enterprise and Sponsorship, and is one of the most popular education challenges in the world.

In the beginning WAS THE WORD

If we can help students better understand where words come from, they'll soon make great strides in their vocabulary acquisition, observes **David Voisin**

"*Literacy enables people to read their own world and to write their own history. Literacy provides access to written knowledge, and knowledge is power.*"

These wise words, drawn from Y. Kassam' s paper 'Who benefits from Illiteracy?' (see bit.ly/ts126-v1) may as well be the mantra of modern education. *University Challenge* contestants introduce their field of expertise in response to the the question '*What do you read?*'. The term 'lecture' does, after all, derive from the French word for reading.

Reading might be the best way of learning new words, but a child can't read without a sufficient range of vocabulary. Or as Ofsted starkly puts it, '*Vocabulary size relates to academic success, and schooling is crucial for increasing the breadth of children's vocabulary*.'

Infiltrating the vernacular

If we're to teach vocabulary efficiently, our first aim should be to understand where English words originate from and how they are structured. Sadly, however, it's often assumed that morphology and etymology are the preserve of people trained in linguistics or classics.

Yet no one needs to be the next Mary Beard before adopting a morphological approach to vocabulary instruction. The Education Endowment Foundation national content manager, and regular *Teach Secondary* contributor Alex Quigley, has previously remarked that, "Recognising how parts of words relate in word families helps our children to develop deeper word knowledge that helps accelerate the growth of their vocabulary".

Historically, English is an amalgamation of Germanic (i.e. Anglo Saxon or Old English) and French. Few people realise that after 1066, French became the official language of England for nearly three centuries – meaning that those who could read and write, did so in French.

The implications of this are important for English vocabulary. Besides the sheer size of the English lexicon, it's interesting to note how words of French origin tend to preponderate in Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary groups, while words of Germanic origin tend to crop up more often in Tier 1 vocabulary.

A good illustration of this would be the words 'child' (Old English) and 'infant' (French), or 'teen' (Old English) and 'adolescent' (French). French itself is descended from Latin and Greek, of course, which have both separately infiltrated the English vernacular throughout history.

Word architecture

While phonics teaching focuses on the relationship between sounds and spellings (phonemes and graphemes), morphology amounts to the study of *word parts* – morphemes being the minimum meaning-bearing units in English.

As the writers of the scholarly paper 'Ending the Reading Wars' point out (see bit.ly/ts126-v2), "Research has shown that teacher knowledge of morphology is scarce and patchy, with many teachers unaware of the ways in which morphemes communicate meaning and govern spelling construction. This seems to be a critical gap in teachers' knowledge".

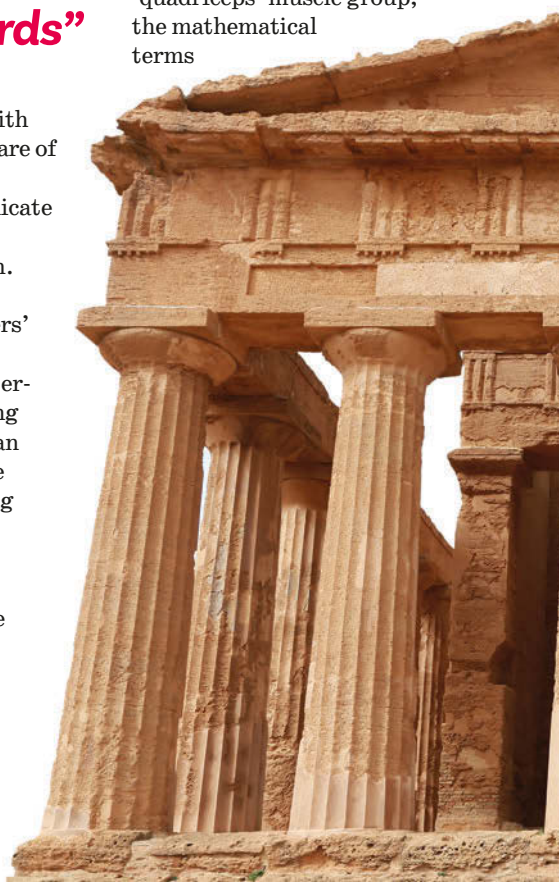
"Each new word encountered should trigger questions about its architecture, grammatical nature and any related words"

It may seem counter-intuitive, but learning a foreign language can actually be one of the best ways of accessing challenging vocabulary in your own tongue. Notwithstanding the transferable self-discipline, routines and strategies students must acquire to learn another language, MFL lessons entail rich opportunities for exploring the architecture of words.

Language teachers are moreover a great source of knowledge when it comes to understanding morphology. After all, morphemes of Latin or Greek origin will be the same as their equivalents in French, English, Spanish or Italian.

Semantic doors

One huge advantage of root words and other morphemes is that they tend not to discriminate based on discipline. Take the Morpheme '*quad*', for instance. On its own, it can refer to a four-wheeled motorcycle / car hybrid. It can also be found in the 'quadriceps' muscle group; the mathematical terms



'quadrilateral' and 'quadratic equation'; the taxonomy of four legged creatures (quadrupeds); the medical term 'quadriplegic'; the list goes on.

Another helpful aspect of morphemes is that they don't just appear in rare words. Consider the morpheme '*magn*' – if a student understands that it broadly means 'big' (as in 'magnum'), a semantic door is instantly opened to further literary terms, such as 'magnitude' or 'magnanimous' (the latter literally meaning '*large soul*'). Common morphemes, once taught, represent a perfect bridge between the basic or common lexicon and rarer words.

Humans are pattern-seeking animals. That's why, as any bilingual speaker will tell you, acquiring twice as many words as a monoglot doesn't take twice as much effort. The more words you know, be it in one or more languages, the more economical the cognitive load of language acquisition becomes, since the process is ultimately all about the successful encoding of information.

Morphemes provide recycled information in the form of orthography (spelling) or semantic clues (meaning). Employing a morphological approach for learning purposes is therefore all about *simplification* – that is, capitalising on information that's already stored in our long term memory. Difficult or rare words might not be as frequent in the language our students commonly use, but their building blocks (etymological roots, affixes, other morphemes) certainly will be.

Nominalisation

The benefit of understanding how to deconstruct words, or identify other words from the same lemma (word family) extend far beyond vocabulary growth and reading comprehension. It also endows users with greater flexibility for writing.

Morphologically-related words don't necessarily share the same grammatical characteristics. Consider the term *clear* (adjective), versus *clearly* (adverb), *clarity* (noun) and *clarify* (verb), which can be used in different structures while retaining the same meaning. For example:

- *'Your message was **clear**...'*
- *'Your message was **clearly** presented...'*
- *'The **clarity** of your message was such...'*
- *'There was no need to **clarify** your message...'*

One of the processes we're seeing here is *nominalisation* – the changing of verbs or adjectives into nouns. As well as helping to avoid tedious and cumbersome repetition, nominalisation allows a writer to change their whole style or register of writing – something that's particularly useful in scientific writing.

Judiciously used, morphology can be used to gather clues about new words (comprehension); link those to other words known by students (reducing cognitive load) and introduce other complex words through common etymological roots.

Built-in automatism

During a recent Spanish lesson, one of my students encountered the word '*luces*', meaning 'lights'. When I asked them for a related word in English they suggested 'lucid', for which I offered the following definition – '*When you are lucid, you see things clearly.*'

I then presented the verb 'elucidate', which I defined as '*bringing something to light, to enlighten the meaning of something.*' So it was that one Spanish word allowed me to introduce four Tier 2 words, all containing the same morpheme.

The efficient exploration of vocabulary shouldn't be an occasional practice but a built-in automatism. Every opportunity matters. Each new word encountered should trigger questions about its architecture, grammatical nature, any related words and semantically-related words of a different grammatical nature.

Most important of all, systematic reference to morphemes previously encountered should be made so that students can build cognitive bridges with vocabulary they have already assimilated and deepen their word depth.

TRY THIS

Familiarising your students with the most prevalent root words and affixes via classroom displays and visual resources can be a useful strategy. I personally use a laminated double-sided roots table alongside an electronic copy, which are quicker to access than etymology dictionaries and perfect tools for helping students to reflect on the common roots of many academic words.

To create them, I compiled a selection of 400 etymological roots based on those most prevalent in the academic word list and across the Tier 2 and Tier 3 words identified for each subject area.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
David Voisin is head of MFL at a school in Lancashire

What's New?

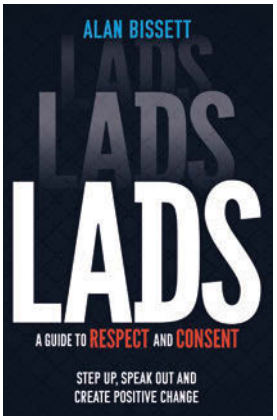
Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Be your own man

It's time to have a conversation, man to man, about some of the behaviours that men often believe to be normal – expected, even.

LADS is a toolkit for teenage boys focusing on respect and consent. An antidote to aggressive online noise, this book will help teens to create positive change, and give them the confidence to be their best selves.

Available now, published by Hachette, and priced at £9.99; see **hachette.co.uk** for more details



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Our live classes are delivered by qualified, subject specialist teachers with experience of delivering alternative provision for students experiencing high levels of anxiety, who may have disengaged from learning. All subjects are supplemented with a library of learning materials, including interactive activities individually tailored to each student. Academy21 can serve as a short-term solution for those on fixed-term exclusions or students awaiting permanent placements. For others, it can be an early intervention or a long-term solution for pupils unable to return to mainstream schooling. We provide fast setup, flexible booking options and no minimum purchase requirements. Visit **academy21.co.uk** to get started.

3 Write better with less

Making better things more responsibly has long been at the heart of Pilot's actions and research.

In 2006, we launched our Begreen range – eco-designed, 85% refillable products made with a minimum of 70% recycled plastic. (percentage of recycled material, excluding consumables.) The range is ideal for classroom use by teachers and pupils alike – from ballpoints whiteboard markers, we have it all. The WRITE BETTER WITH LESS principle speaks to our aim of reducing our production's ecological impact, whilst preserving our standards of quality and innovation. We continue to drive these standards on through the essential pillars that are our 4R's – namely 'recycle', 'reduce', 'refill' and 'reclaim'. For more details, visit **pilotpen.co.uk**

4 Diverse experiences

The Experience Education group has successfully launched over 45,000 trips for more than 1.5 million students to 100 countries. Collectively, it provides the peace of mind teachers deserve by carrying out stringent health and safety policies and providing unrivalled financial protection.

Individually, the group members' curriculum tours (travelbound.co.uk), sports tours (edwindoran.com), ski trips (skibound.co.uk), expeditions (weareworldchallenge.com) and UK activity centres (jca-adventure.co.uk) have made them widely trusted experts in worldwide tailored experiences for UK schools. To learn more, visit **experienceeducation.com**

5 Awe and wonder

Oxford Smart Quest is a brand new KS3 English course that inspires awe and wonder in the classroom and beyond, bringing together high quality, diverse texts with relevant resources, themes and activities to ensure KS3 English lessons are engaging and motivating for all.

Offering a blended teaching and learning solution, with print Student and Teacher Books fully integrated with digital content, *Oxford Smart* Quest provides extensive support for learners of all attainment levels.

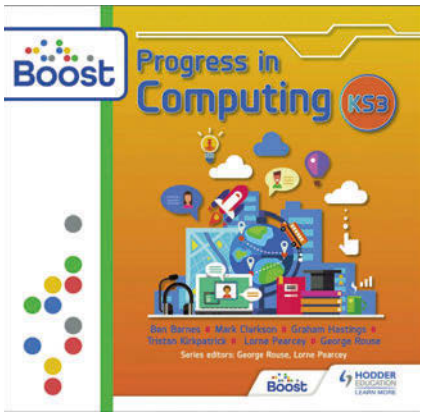
To sign up for a free print pack and access a digital taster, visit **oxfordsecondary.com/smart-quest**

6 Helping hand

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on the issues that are important to them. Our helpline offers a friendly understanding ear when the going gets tough.

IDDT also supplies information packs to parents and teachers to help them better understand the needs of children with diabetes in school, and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications – with a cure still elusive, IDDT additionally funds essential research. As a registered charity, IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations. For more information, or to join IDDT, contact **01604 622 837,** email **martin@iddtinternational.org** or visit **iddtinternational.org**

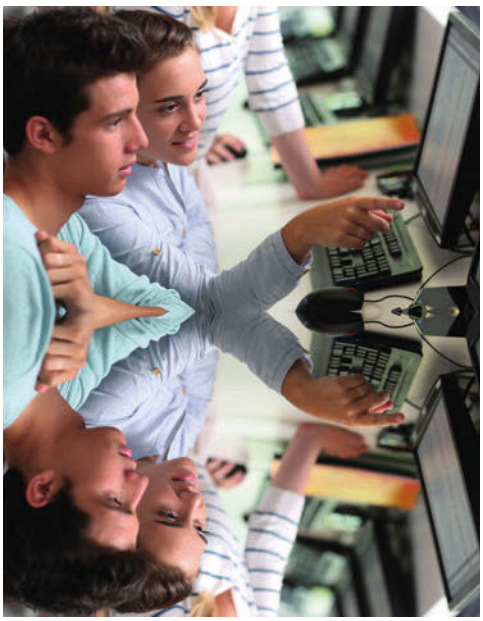


7 Digital know-how

Hodder Education has listened to how you teach computing at KS3 and designed a fantastic toolkit of digital and print resources around you, containing everything you'll need to confidently deliver the National Curriculum in computing and develop your students' skills in both ICT and digital media.

Progress in Computing: Key Stage 3 combines ready-to-use lesson plans, presentations, videos and animations, multimedia assets, interactive resources, quizzes and assessments with an expert-written Student Book. Visit **hoddereducation.co.uk/PiC** to register for a free trial of *Progress in Computing: Key Stage 3: Boost* and request an eInspection copy of the Student Book. For more details, contact **computing@hoddereducation.co.uk**

8 Computer science, flipped



Craig 'n' Dave is a comprehensive package of GCSE and A Level computer science resources designed to be delivered via a flipped-classroom learning model. The contents include schemes of learning, student workbooks, supporting videos, model answers, end-of-topic tests, programming activities and more besides, thus helping to reduce teachers' planning and preparation time.

The package's resources aim to facilitate self-starting lessons and get students engaging immediately. The included homework activities meanwhile encourage students to demonstrate independent learning, helping them to grow in confidence and take ownership of their unique learning journeys. To find out more, visit **craigndave.org** or contact **admin@craigndave.co.uk**

9 Reduce your homework load

From trusted publishers White Rose Maths and Oxford University Press comes a series of new Maths Practice Journals matched to the White Rose Maths scheme of learning.

Costing from £4.20 per book, the series provides a simple and affordable way of setting up a Year 7 to Year 9 maths homework policy. The Maths Practice Journals are matched to your White Rose teaching, giving you the reassurance of knowing that your students are completing relevant, engaging and meaningful homework. The Maths Practice Journals can be used flexibly to suit individual schools, teachers and students, and can also be used at home. To find out more, visit **oxford.ly/WRMPracticeJournals**

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- 6 ways to ensure your edtech has an educational impact
- How to engage parents using digital tools
- Using video games in secondary schools – what teachers can learn

Answering the call

Paul Watson sets out his reasons for leaving a career in nursing and healthcare in favour of returning – in a sense – to secondary school...

"*I don't want to go. I don't know what it's going to be like. The children will laugh at me. The teachers won't want me there! Do I have to go? Can't I stay at home?*"

"*Stop being silly. The children will all be lovely, and I'm sure the teachers will be delighted to have you there. I refuse to ring them and tell them that you're not going in. Besides, you have to go to school...*

...you're the school nurse."

I laugh when I think about writing that exchange in an issue of *Nursing in Practice*, many years ago now. Little has changed in that I still get similar feelings when going into schools – though now it's as a full-time teacher, rather than the school nurse.

Community first

I first entered nursing in 2001, going on to work in different areas while learning lots along the way. More recently, I moved into a training role within the NHS, providing clinical skills and resuscitation training to staff across the trust area.

It's been while doing this that I've remembered what I enjoy the most about my job, and the people that give me the most pleasure to work with. I've now decided to concentrate my efforts on teaching, and return, albeit in a very different capacity, to secondary education. I'm pleased to say that I've just been offered a full time teaching position at a secondary school just up the road from where I live.

Outside of my work roles, I've also spent many years volunteering my time to train hundreds of people in basic first aid and CPR for organisations ranging from Girl Guide and Brownie groups to church groups and non-patient facing NHS staff. While working for the NHS, I've also offered my time at weekends and evenings to help support the Ambulance Service, working as a Community First Responder.

Over the years I've been honoured to have been thanked in some very special ways for this work (not that I really deserve it, certainly no more than anyone else) and received several awards – including Anglia Ruskin University's 'Success in Business Award' for my continued voluntary and ongoing work on Asthma management and 'Nurse of the Year' in 2013 for my work around bed wetting. I was even invited to a reception with the then Prince Charles, to discuss that and my asthma work, which was very exciting...

"I want to come back to education to help shape the future of this country"

Experience and skills

I know – "*SO WHAT?!*", I hear you say. "*What do we care about all the things you've done, and the places you've been?*" The answer to that question is that you *absolutely shouldn't*. The reason I've shared it with you is to provide some background.

While I've worked hard to get to where I've got to, I couldn't have done it without the guidance and support of people around me, and all their encouragement, pushing, listening and suggestions. Mostly from my wife and daughters – not, as you might expect, from the NHS or management.

I feel that now is the time for me to provide this support and input to those who need and deserve it the most, so that they can be the best they can be. I want to come back to education to help shape the future of this country and of wider society. And the only way that I can do that is to offer my experience and skills to future generations – by standing with them as their teacher, mentor, confidante, supporter and professional friend.

I'm aware that much of what I have to say will be dismissed as the ramblings of an old man. Yet I hope that some key nuggets of information might stick and produce compassionate, considerate and caring citizens of the future. I'm looking forward to coming back to teaching, and hope that all involved in my return benefit from it as much as I hope to.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Paul Watson is a qualified nurse, and now qualified teacher, preparing to take up his first teaching role

The anti-maths MINDSET

Once attitudes have hardened against maths at an early age, the process can be difficult to undo – but not impossible, writes **Nicola Woodford-Smith**...

We've all observed them in maths lessons. The student who struggles to settle, seems distracted or disengaged while protesting that the subject is, '*Boooooooring...*'

The learner who finds it difficult to answer questions on the spot and opts for the easiest answers every time. The student who rarely ever hands their homework on time – if at all.

You may have one of these learners in your class, perhaps several. The anti-maths mindset is infectious.

And then there are the friends, colleagues and parents who are always quick to opine, '*I hate maths. Dreadful subject. I'm terrible at it...*'

You know those people. You've met them. You may even, whisper it, *be one yourself* – hastily passing on the dinner bill for somebody else to work out; asking a partner or friend to work out your costs in the supermarket; never quite getting a handle on your budget.

The anti-maths mask

Right now in the UK, it seems socially acceptable to be 'anti-maths' in a way you rarely ever hear when applied to subjects such as English. ('*Literacy? Ugh, I hate words. Just read out what this says so I don't have to...*')

Maths is the lynchpin of our society, yet so many of us seem to disregard it – students, teachers and parents alike. We overlook the power the subject grants us to better understand how all manner of natural and man-made processes work; how to make calculated predictions and estimations; how to control our own finances and plan pathways that will support us in the long-term.

This anti-maths mindset is a stifling one that restricts the potential of children, young people and adults everywhere. But it often masks a far deeper issue – that of maths anxiety.

Introducing anxiety

Picture this. You grow up in a household with at least one parent or carer who struggled with maths as a child. Before you even start school, you've heard many a passing comment about how maths is '*Too hard,*' '*awful,*' '*impossible.*' You've watched them frequently struggle with basic arithmetic over many years.

Then, during your first ever primary school maths lesson, you feel that same fear. The maths teacher asks you to stand up and poses a quick question, hoping for a quick reply. Perhaps because you're so apprehensive, you don't quite hear the question and your throat dries up. Maybe you eventually give the wrong answer and feel bad for getting it wrong. Maybe you say nothing.

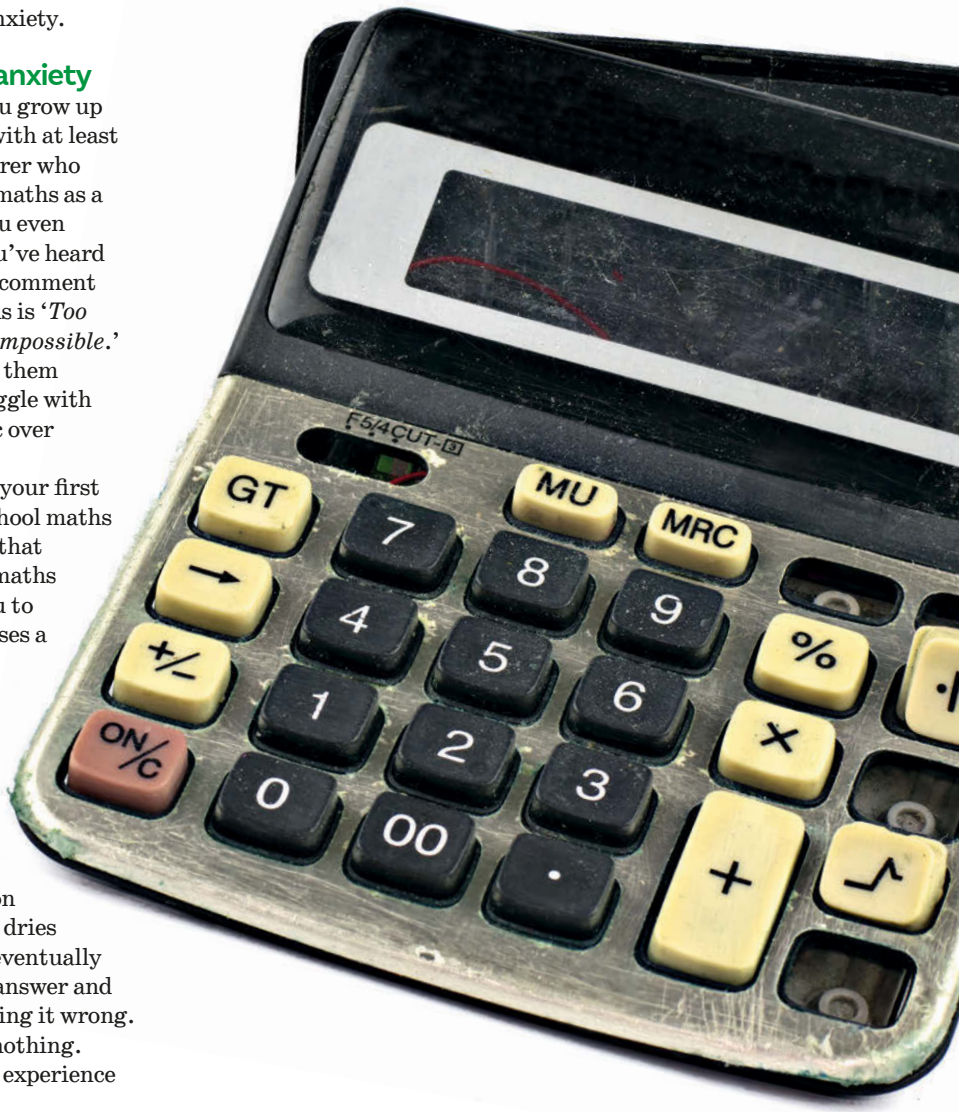
Multiply that experience over several years of primary lessons and it's easy to see how, by the time they've reached Y7, anxious learners will be well on the way to becoming People Who Struggle With Maths, destined to be forever disengaged from the subject for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, some teachers will see the symptoms of maths anxiety as indicative of poor behaviour and seek to address them by way of disciplinary solutions, but this can actually compound learner disengagement even further – by making maths feel intimidating, punishing, and simply 'not for them'.

In actual fact, the message we need to be spreading is that maths is for *everyone*.

The unlearning process

More than a third of 15- to 24 -year-olds in the UK feel anxiety about maths. Just

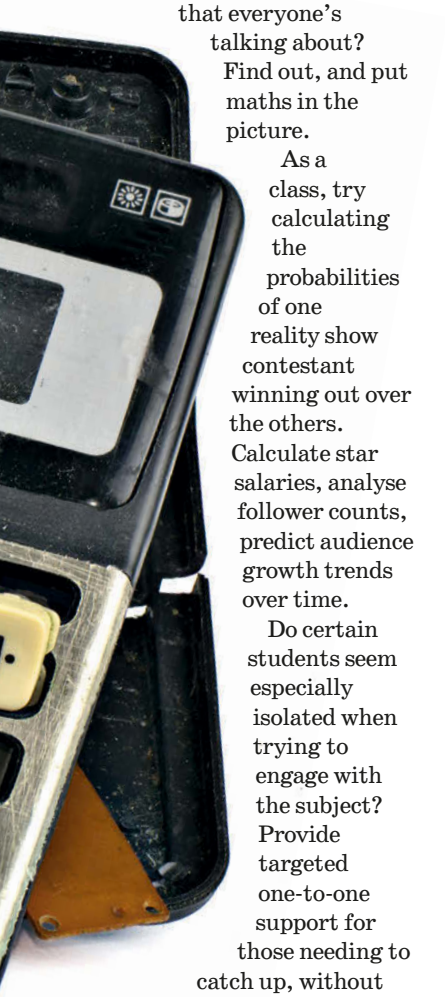


26% of undergraduate students possess the numerical skills and understanding necessary for daily life and work, while 1 in 5 parents suffer a fear of numbers.

The good news, however, is that school can go a long way towards turning these numbers around and reclaiming maths as the accessible, fun, creative and empowering subject it's always been.

We can start by helping students and peers unlearn their negative mindsets. If they profess to find maths '*boooooring*', show them how this couldn't be further from the truth. Seek out resources that include relevant, real-life examples to help engage them more.

What TV shows are your learners interested in? Who's the latest influencer that everyone's talking about? Find out, and put maths in the picture.



As a class, try calculating the probabilities of one reality show contestant winning out over the others. Calculate star salaries, analyse follower counts, predict audience growth trends over time.

Do certain students seem especially isolated when trying to engage with the subject? Provide targeted one-to-one support for those needing to catch up, without fear of any in-class humiliation. More broadly, utilise group learning so that students can explore concepts and challenges as part of a team engaged in a problem-solving exercise – just like professional mathematicians.

Paving the way

This spirit of collaboration can be extended outside of class, by partnering with external organisations and maths leaders that promote engagement within STEM, like the Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers (afbe.org.uk) or Stemettes (stemettes.org).

Celebrate the diversity of people who love and use maths, focusing on individuals who are excelling and breaking down maths barriers, or who paved the way in years gone by.

One example of the latter is Dr Gladys West – the Black mathematician whose work led directly to the invention of GPS. Another is Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi – the 9th century Muslim academic widely known as the father of algebra.

Invite your learners to see that mathematics is not only open to people 'like them,' but could actually help them thrive in later life. It's important to also stress here that maths itself is a very diverse subject. Some learners may struggle with trigonometry, but have a real aptitude for algebra, geometry or computing and greatly enjoy studying them.

In the same way that we don't tend to 'give up on English' after reading a style of writing we don't like, we must encourage students to think of maths as a subject that's constantly in flux, ever-expanding and endlessly surprising.

Ending the vicious cycle

By freeing maths from the confines of fusty stereotypes, we can give new generations the chance to discover those aspects of maths that feel positive and powerful to them.

This could help end the vicious anti-maths mindset cycle we see, which begins with feelings of anxiety regarding the subject, before hardening into a deeper antipathy.

You can speed this process up by lessening the pressures of your classroom. Use language that encourages, rather than penalises. Look out for anxious reactions and try to mitigate these with breaks, fun activities or even calming music.

Make room for growth, in place of more triggers for shutdown. Create a teaching space in which it's safe to make mistakes, be curious, use thinking time, raise a hand to ask questions or speak up whenever a new topic feels challenging.

This is when 'avoidant' shifts to 'engaged.' This is how 'struggles' can become 'breakthroughs.' This is the power of maths. And it's available to us all.

"We must encourage students to think of maths as fluid, expansive and endlessly surprising"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Nicola Woodford-Smith is a Maths Subject Partner for Pearson, having taught maths for 13 years at both GCSE and A Level

10 TIPS FOR MORE POSITIVE MINDSETS

1. Choose positive words that encourage curiosity and exploration in the subject
2. Avoid black-and-white statements that tell learners there is only 'right' or 'wrong'
3. Reassure students of the importance of making mistakes when learning new concepts
4. Make space for inclusive group discussions in class
5. Emphasise the diversity of the subject, its learners and pioneers
6. Try to never put a student on the spot in front of others
7. Steer clear of punitive language that can trigger a handbrake on learning
8. Use real-life, relatable contexts that speak to your students' experiences
9. Invite collaboration with leading maths lovers in your local community and the wider maths sector
10. Highlight the universal importance of the subject in your students' lives – as young people now and adults in future

Protect your data

Mark Hodges examines how data protection officers can help schools make long overdue and necessary changes to their data privacy and security provision...

In any organisation, cultural change takes time and effort to put into motion. It's certainly not something that happens overnight. In a school, it will also require ongoing commitment from leadership, staff, students and parents alike.

Since the introduction of GDPR in 2018, schools have been held more accountable for the data they collect. Having robust data protection measures in place is therefore beneficial to schools in the long-run, as this should ensure that they reduce the overall amount of personal data they process, and implement more efficient, streamlined and responsible processes in relation to data considered essential.

Setting high standards

By appointing a data protection officer (DPO), a school will have in place a designated (and ideally experienced) individual responsible for overseeing all data protection practices. The DPO should stay updated on privacy regulations, provide guidance to staff and ensure compliance with all data protection policies – thus playing a crucial role in helping schools ensure compliance with data protection regulations, and fostering an improved culture of privacy.

To make sure DPOs can lead the charge, school should look to prioritise the importance of its data protection and privacy policies. The aforementioned stakeholders will all need to be on board, but also be willing to collaborate as much as possible. Any good DPO will want to encourage this, offer their input on how such collaborations should work and see to it that high standards are set for future data protection conduct within the school.

With data protection being a complex and rapidly evolving field, a DPO can bring much-needed specialist knowledge and expertise to bear in discussions around privacy laws, data security and best practice. They can also help to establish strong data protection frameworks for schools that ensure compliance, and in time, foster a culture of responsible privacy and data security.

5 key strategies

To ensure your school is embarking on a better data protection strategy, a DPO will likely observe the following steps:

1. Develop new policies
The DPO will collaborate with the school's leadership to develop comprehensive data protection policies and procedures tailored to the school's specific needs, while ensuring that these align with all applicable privacy laws and best practices.

2. Break down silos
In our experience, we've found that a huge number of schools aren't consistently logging incidents or near misses, such that if a data breach occurs in one department, it often won't be shared with any others. Prompt logging, sharing and then fixing is the best form of long-term prevention. While it can be daunting to share details of a data breach with the wider workforce, doing so is essential for strengthening your data protection against future threats.

3. Encourage discussion
By promoting open discussions around privacy concerns and responsible uses of technology, we can reinforce the importance of obtaining consent before collecting or sharing personal information.

4. Talk to parents
A DPO will help a school reliably communicate to parents and guardians information regarding its commitment to data protection, while also outlining the role parents can play to maintaining privacy themselves.

5. Provide training and education
DPOs can also help schools conduct training sessions and workshops in order to educate staff, teachers, and students on issues pertaining to data protection, privacy laws and best practices. This way, you can be confident that everyone understands both the importance of safeguarding personal information, and what they can do personally to maintain robust data security.

By employing the above strategies, a DPO can create a cultural shift within a school, make data protection a shared priority and instil a greater sense of responsibility and accountability for safeguarding personal information. Over time, this cultural change will then help to foster a more privacy-conscious environment, where data protection is ingrained within a school's ethos.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Mark Hodges is education sector lead at the IT services provider, Cantium; for more information, visit cantium.solutions

STAR *performers*

Helen Tierney finds out about a select group of students whose lives take them from school to roles in high profile theatrical productions and back again...

George Menezes-Cutts

Did you ever take part in a school production? It can be an unforgettable experience for participants, but also a revelation for staff, parents and peers as they witness the emergence of students' talent and dedication.

There can be a real buzz of energy generated throughout the school community when a production is on – so imagine how it must feel for professional child performers, many in non-specialist state schools, who have to dash off when the bell goes to perform in London's West End.

Jaydah Bell-Ricketts, right

Dual roles

George Menezes-Cutts is a Y7 student attending his local comprehensive, but has already clocked up a number of West End performances, including a stint in *The Prince of Egypt* and the role of Junior Clyde in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Last autumn, he managed to combine settling in to secondary with rehearsals for South Bank's festive show, *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas*. At the time of writing, he's in rehearsal for the National Theatre's upcoming autumn production of *The Witches*, in which he stars as Bruno.

Merging the demands of both school and a burgeoning theatrical career is an enormous challenge, but one that George has been taking in his stride. "In primary school I coped well. I'm only in year 7, so I'm not sure what it will be like when homework increases later on, but having online access to resources makes that easier now. I think being in secondary brings much more pressure doing this, but I'm really lucky that my school celebrates me being in shows."

Rehearsals for *Smoky Mountain* ran alongside those of his school's production of *The Lion King*, yet George's professional experience has made him no less enthusiastic about taking part in his school's extracurricular arts activities.

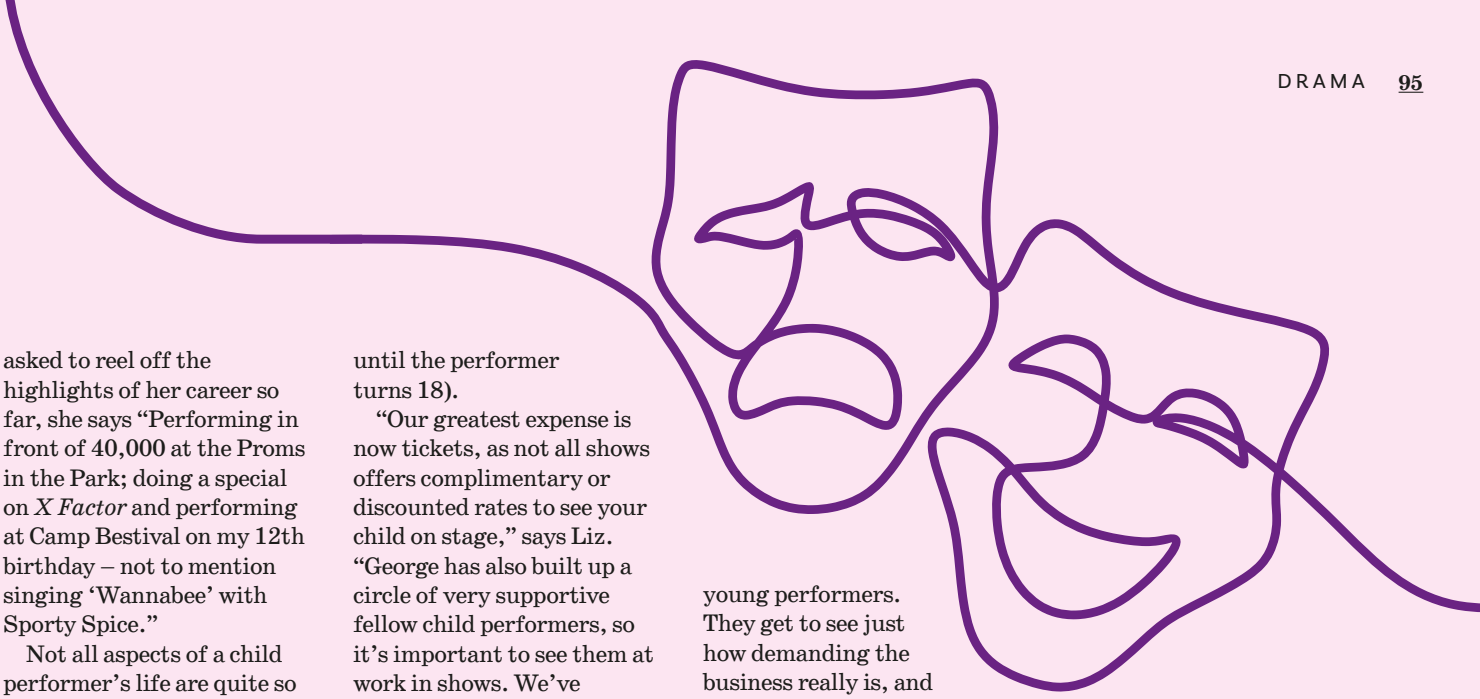
"I'm keen to take part as fully as possible in my school arts," he says. "I like sharing my experiences with them, and also seeing their talent. It's good to be part of school drama."

Behind the glamour

Someone else who knows about the trials of juggling show and school duties is Jaydah Bell-Ricketts. Now 17 and studying at sixth form college, she's been appearing in shows since the age of 10, including *Bugsy Malone* and *School of Rock*. For her, one particular pressure has been establishing her place in social groups when, like George, you're performing in shows when in Y7.

"Starting at a new school, it's hard enough to make friends. The addition of missing school when groups are forming can be tricky, although people are super supportive and intrigued by the work you do..."

For Jaydah, at least, it was all worth it in the end. When



asked to reel off the highlights of her career so far, she says "Performing in front of 40,000 at the Proms in the Park; doing a special on *X Factor* and performing at Camp Bestival on my 12th birthday – not to mention singing 'Wannabee' with Sporty Spice."

Not all aspects of a child performer's life are quite so glamorous, however. Jaydah recalls using her train journeys to and from school to try and catch up on work, and also remembers well the rollercoaster of emotions when a show ended: "It's very emotional. Your very last show is usually filled with energy and joy but there's an overwhelming sadness, knowing you'll miss the people you have spent so much time with."

Financial costs and time commitments

At what age does it become apparent a child has the potential to be a professional performer? George's mother, Liz Menezes, recalls how from early on, George would turn their kitchen doorway into a stage area and create mini-extravaganzas from mashing together elements of shows he'd been taken to.

Stacy Bell-Ricketts similarly recognised her daughter's talent for singing and dancing very early on when she was a toddler, but things only really took off after she enrolled the then 9-year-old Jaydah at theatre school.

And the cost to parents of an activity like this? George attends a mainstream school, but has taken extra tutoring classes. Liz confirms that having your child on the stage can indeed be costly, despite the earnings (which, incidentally, are deposited into a bank account and left untouched by parent or child until the performer turns 18).

"Our greatest expense is now tickets, as not all shows offers complimentary or discounted rates to see your child on stage," says Liz. "George has also built up a circle of very supportive fellow child performers, so it's important to see them at work in shows. We've recently been to support his friends playing junior roles in *Tina*, *Mary Poppins* and *The Crucible*."

For Stacy Bell-Ricketts, the main pressures relate more to time than finances: "You're always dashing from school to theatre to ensure they're up to date with their work, eating and sleeping, as well as juggling your own work and the other children's."

"Starting at a new school, it's hard enough to make friends; the addition of missing school when groups are forming can be tricky"

Hours of dedication

Having worked for many years as a chaperone and tutor at the West End and the English National Ballet and on the *Grange Hill* set, Jennifer Kuntner knows how hard it can be to get things right for child performers and their families.

"I think so much depends on their parents," she observes. "I did come across overbearing individuals who almost wanted to be backstage with their children, but the industry now is highly regulated, and licensing is detailed and thorough, with strict rules of conduct for all.

"There are many good things about the work for young performers. They get to see just how demanding the business really is, and how many hours of dedication it takes to be on stage. They have to be emotionally resilient and able to cope with failure and criticism.

"Nowadays, there's the added pressure of social media – but even years ago, when I was at *Grange Hill*, you saw how difficult it was for those who became nationally famous for a relatively short time. Child performers don't always become adult ones."

Jennifer can still recall some wise words from a stage school headteacher, who used to firmly tell parents – "Here, we train them for *two* occupations…'

Careful planning

It's not hard to recall child stars of stage and screen who found adult life tragically difficult later on. Keeping things realistic seems to be the key, which is why Jaydah is currently in the process of applying to universities. "That's where I'll be for the next few years, but I'm keen to keep acting alongside my studies, whether it be in theatre or TV," she says.

George also has ambitions for performing to remain part of his future, and currently has his sights set on roles such as Miss Trunchbull in *Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical*, the adult Clyde and Alexander Hamilton.

"I'm definitely going to try and carry on in theatre," he notes, "but my other dreams include running a bookshop and writing plays!"

It would seem, then, that even at secondary school, it's possible to juggle both stage and school – albeit with some careful planning. "If you love it, absolutely do it," Jaydah enthuses. "It may feel overwhelming at times, especially with school work, but seek help from your teachers, friends, parents and castmates for a good support system.

"Take a leap of faith, and if it works out, you'll have made lifelong friends and memories."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Helen Tierney has run music departments in comprehensive schools for over 25 years, was an advanced skills teacher for secondary music in Barnet and now works freelance in music teaching, examining and dementia work; her book, *Music Cover Lessons*, is available now (Rhinegold Education, £39.99)

Spot the learning SIMULATIONS

Ian Stacey reflects on the steps teachers can take to prevent students using chatbots to complete their class assignments for them...

I'm old enough to remember when the internet first found its way into schools. My experience wasn't of it being announced in the newspaper, or loudly heralded on television. Instead, it was simply a colleague at the end of the day, pointing at their computer and remarking, "Look what I can do."

It was clear that this new technology was going to usher some great new possibilities for classroom teaching, but also a fair number of problems. Yet despite the huge impact this technology was clearly going to have on our livelihoods, the profession was given little guidance at first. Teachers, parents and children simply had to figure it all out in their own time as they went along.

Gauging the impact

Unfortunately, it's been a similar experience in schools with every new technology that's appeared since, from social media, to VLEs to smartphones: *"Here's a shiny new toy. We don't know what the problems are yet – but I'm sure we can sort them out later."*

Last year, a technology quietly appeared with far-reaching implications that are set to dwarf the aforementioned examples – namely AI chatbots. For the uninitiated, these allow users to create pages of text from just a handful of prompt words. Once again, I've been left to figure out what the impact of this technology is going to be for me and my students. I know that I've barely scratched the surface, but thought I'd share here my initial thoughts so far and some possible solutions.

The most obvious issue is plagiarism. If little Johnny can now get ChatGPT to write his coursework for him, why would he want to write it himself? There's also the related question of whether this counts as theft. For now, at least, AI-generated writing is largely considered the creation of whoever enters the prompt words, regardless of whether they've written, edited or even read any of the generated text.

Needless to say, however, since the whole purpose of coursework is to *prove understanding*, I don't want anyone, or indeed anything, writing it besides the students themselves.

The second issue is accuracy. AI chatbots aren't above citing facts or statistics that are either provably false, or ones it's spontaneously generated – i.e. *made up*. Related to this is the issue of inappropriate content. You are what you eat, and since AI chatbots are fed by data and content harvested from the internet, this can easily lead to potential complications.

Take the case of 'Nothing, Forever', for example. This was a project that was set up with the fun aim of creating an AI-scripted sitcom – only for it to be temporarily shut down after creating material deemed to be transphobic.

Humans versus machines

An initial solution proposed within our school was to try to block ChatGPT and similar sites using network-level security, but this isn't a long-term answer. Pupils can simply access to the same sites, services and software at home, and ChatGPT is being joined by a growing number of AI chatbots. How could any school ever hope to track them all?

Another solution then presented itself in the form of 'classifiers' – a new class of software which promises to help teachers, publishers, employers and other interested parties to distinguish between text produced by software and original material written by a human being. They still have some way to go though, with the current generation of classifier software only producing an accuracy score of around 26%.

> **"Could we be witnessing the birth of a new phenomenon, whereby more affluent pupils are able to 'cheat' more convincingly?"**

Perhaps the real answer lies in steps that we can take during the drafting process. I've started asking my pupils to complete a first draft of the assignments they're set using paragraphs composed purely in bullet points. The advantage of this is that children are less likely to copy and paste text they don't understand into this kind of format, where the

substance of what their essay is actually saying is much more clear.

At a later date, some time after the point where what they've written is no longer so fresh in their minds, the pupils are tasked with revising their initial drafts by turning them into properly structured essays with standard paragraphs.

Learning exercises

Whatever we might think of AI as a tool in its current form, the technology is here to stay and will be playing an ever larger role in our schools, whether we like it or not. We can almost certainly expect the pupils of today to be routinely using it once they've entered the workplace. Given that a significant part of a school's role is to prepare pupils for the next stage of their life, we must teach them how to use it effectively.

I know enough to say that I'm not ready to do that yet myself. I would, however, maintain that introducing a process of 'redrafting' – where AI suggests changes and alterations students can make to their early drafts, so that they're written more cohesively – could be one example where pupils can use AI to help them with a useful learning exercise.

And yet, there's one final problem I can foresee which nether I nor my colleagues have any kind of answer for yet – and that's the creation of a huge gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

ChatGPT and its more well-known rival chatbots are, for the most part, free for anyone to access. As such, while they can certainly generate 'unique' text at impressive speed, the end result will often appear somewhat clunky in terms of sentence construction.

However, it's now possible to access a number of subscription-based chatbots which, so we're told, are capable of generating text to a much higher standard. Could we be witnessing the birth of a new phenomenon, whereby more affluent pupils are able to 'cheat' more convincingly, and obtain improvements to grades that were already better than those of their peers to start with?

Ultimately, there are many possible directions in which AI chatbots and related technologies could take us, both good and bad. Those are some of my thoughts – I'm eager to hear what everybody else has to say...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ian Stacey is a product design and food teacher based at a comprehensive school in Essex

AI-PROOF YOUR COURSEWORK

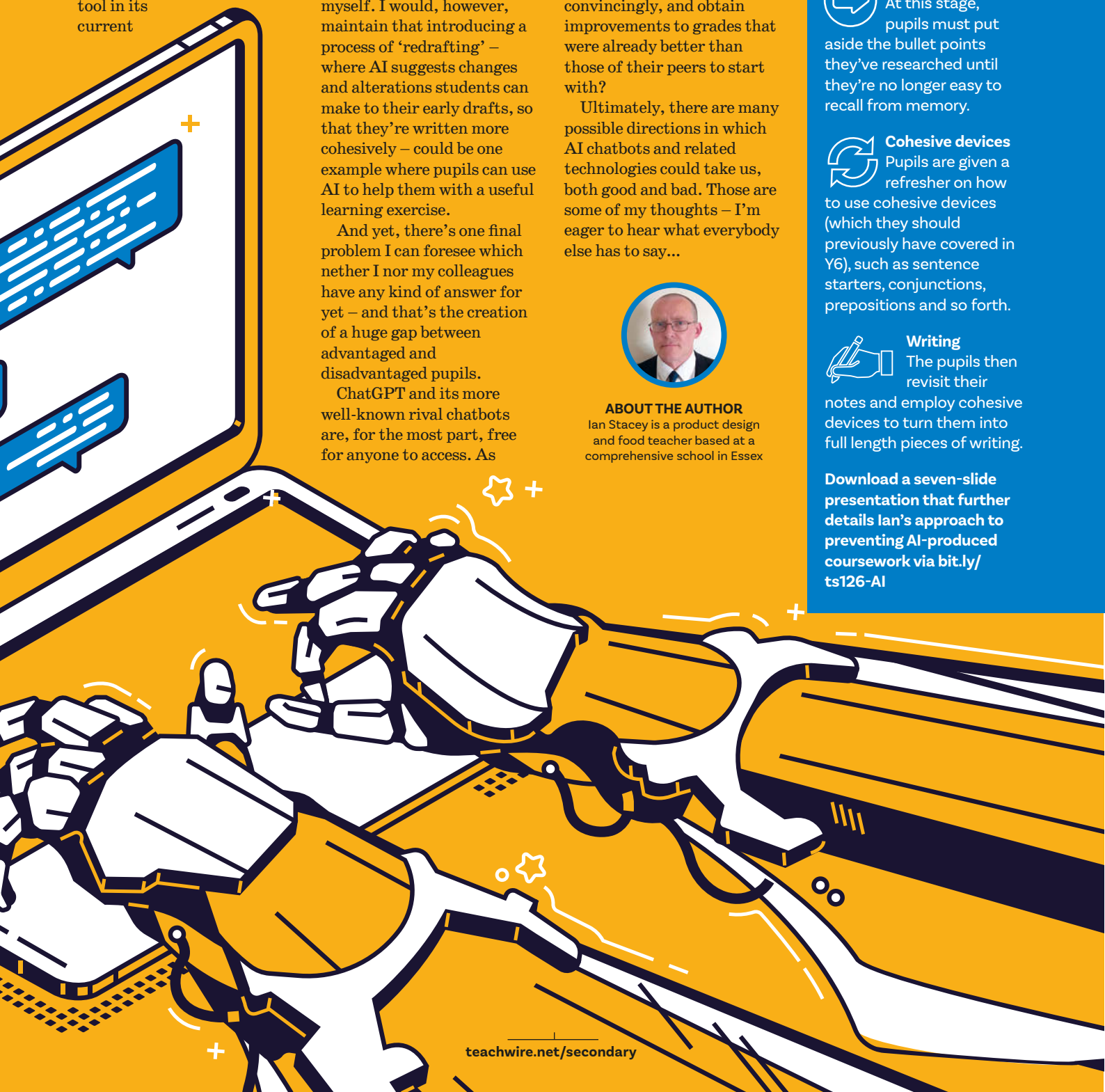
Drafting
At the start of the writing process, pupils are given a series of short prompts to research. Crucially, the details they uncover must be recorded in the form of bullet points, while keeping the sentences as simple as possible.

Moving on
At this stage, pupils must put aside the bullet points they've researched until they're no longer easy to recall from memory.

Cohesive devices
Pupils are given a refresher on how to use cohesive devices (which they should previously have covered in Y6), such as sentence starters, conjunctions, prepositions and so forth.

Writing
The pupils then revisit their notes and employ cohesive devices to turn them into full length pieces of writing.

Download a seven-slide presentation that further details Ian's approach to preventing AI-produced coursework via bit.ly/ts126-AI



CLASSROOM VOICES

"The only positivity is the relief once it's over"

Given the unpredictability and humiliation involved in Ofsted's oversight of schools, it's hardly surprising that teachers are seeking jobs elsewhere, says **Carl Smith**

Have any readers had a positive and affirming experience with Ofsted lately? * *Bells toll, owls hoot, tumbleweed bobs along on the breeze* * Nope. Me neither. Not that Amanda Spielman will have had many herself recently, I suspect. Though I could be wrong.

The problem with sudden, seemingly arbitrary and yet career-threatening inspections is that they're, well, *arbitrary* and *career-threatening*. The terms 'positive' and 'affirming' don't usually enter into it.

Typically, the only positivity you can expect from an inspection is the relief once it's over – providing you've not been rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate, of course. In which case you're required to keep the news to yourself until the 'big reveal' six weeks later. At that point you're then expected to send a report laying out your inadequacies directly to potentially thousands of inboxes, in a naming and shaming exercise reminiscent of the medieval stocks.

After the metaphorical vegetables have been thrown and the turnip juice on your face has dried, you're free to run the inspection gauntlet again. Unless you'd rather pursue a career that doesn't involve ritual public humiliation. I've heard there are quite a few of those.

Viral insecurity

Admittedly, teaching isn't the only job subject to this kind of naming and shaming ritual. Footballers tend to get a fair few figurative turnips thrown in their direction, as do politicians and pop stars. There's a rather pernicious idea at play here that because the potential rewards of such high profile careers are great, those affluent individuals who succeed in them are fair game for a spot of turnip-throwing. I can't say I agree.

Yet this public retribution is even harder to justify when the targets are rather more modestly remunerated secondary school teachers. Needless to say, I'm not a fan.

We have a 'culture of fear' in schools (Spielman's words, not mine – see bit.ly/ts126-TV1) because insecurity is a virus – one that's recently taken the form of a national epidemic. The vaccine in this analogy is trust, but alas, its nationwide roll-out has barely begun. Instead, we're simply advised to take our chances and hope we end up somewhere with a low infection rate – i.e. a posh school.

Relentless pain

Ofsted is founded on the myth that fear drives improvement. That may be true up to a point, but relentless fear serves barely any purpose at all. Fear is similar to pain in that we may not *like* it, but can appreciate that it serves a purpose in alerting us to danger. When pain becomes relentless, however, there's no other purpose it can serve, and we'll do anything to avoid it. Like getting another job.

Which is precisely what teachers are doing. Indeed, that's what Amanda Spielman herself is doing, having announced her intention to step down as Ofsted's HMCI before the end of the year.

Presently, being a teacher can feel like being a criminal. When inspectors call, it's via dawn raids where they descend on schools, intent on finding incriminating evidence.

Wreaking havoc

Oddly, though, it seems that incriminating evidence is more readily found at schools in the north of England. In a seeming re-enactment of the 'Harrying of the North' (ask a history teacher) inspectors appear to have wreaked more havoc in that part of the country than any other.

Another favourite target for Ofsted's opprobrium are schools in disadvantaged areas. The places kids go to when they have the temerity to have parents who aren't well off or well educated. These schools are knee-deep in turnip juice, so unsurprisingly, many teachers would prefer not to swim there.

Call me a medieval moderniser if you will, but I believe the age of throwing turnips ought to be behind us by now. How about growing them instead?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Carl Smith (@SmithCarl19530) is a school leader, having worked in secondary schools for over 30 years, a frequent contributor to educational books and periodicals and a public speaker

Addictions and algorithms

What does it take to equip young people with the skill of self-regulation when it comes to their social media use? **Natasha Devon** shares her thoughts...

Whenever I speak to parents on the topic of tech and social media, the same question is often asked – '*How much screen time is appropriate for an X-year-old?*'

This might seem like a simple query, but in reality it's anything but. After all, 'screen time' is a somewhat nebulous concept. Two hours scrolling TikTok isn't quite the same as two hours spent reading Orwell on a Kindle.

I also think this question, whilst understandable, misses the point when it comes to how we guide young people through the tech revolution. As noted in a recent report published by Ofcom (see bit.ly/ts126-ES1), it's not the fact of social media itself, or even how much time is spent on it that's the issue; it's all about literacy.

Providing children and teenagers with the skills to navigate the online world is a process that requires more vigilance than simply monitoring their screen time. That might sound daunting, but I believe there are just a few key abilities – most of which classroom teachers are prioritising already – that cover multiple bases.

1. Self-regulation

Technology is incredibly addictive, for two reasons. One is the simple fact of the human condition. We don't like to sit with uncomfortable feelings. Boredom is mildly uncomfortable, and technology is an easy distraction.

The other reason is that apps and games are designed to steal our time, using the same techniques that hook in gambling addicts. The more time we spend engaging in online activity, the more of our data can be harvested and sold onto third parties. As the (brilliant) Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma* puts it (see thesocialdilemma.com), '*If you don't have to pay for a product, that means you ARE the product.*'

"Apps and games are designed to steal our time, using the same techniques that hook in gambling addicts"

Evidence shows that there are two groups of young people who are particularly vulnerable to this form of addiction – those who aren't supervised at all, and those at the other end of the scale whose guardians impose a zero tolerance regime. The key is learning how to practice moderation.

The Austrian neuroscientist Viktor E Frankl was once quoted as saying, "*Between stimulus and response there is space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*"

It's a quote often referenced in addiction therapy, the idea being that if we can create an alert between stimulus and response, that should give our conscious brain an opportunity to intervene and make a choice.

In practice, this might involve a young person deciding in advance how long they want to spend playing a video game or scrolling on socials, then setting an alarm on their phone. When the alarm goes off, that's the alert which will prompt them to reflect on how they're spending their time.

2. Navigating Content

The most important skill anyone of any age can learn when it comes to surviving the internet is scientific literacy. Just because there's 'a study' referenced on YouTube by someone with a pie chart or an impressive vocabulary, that doesn't necessarily make what they're saying true.

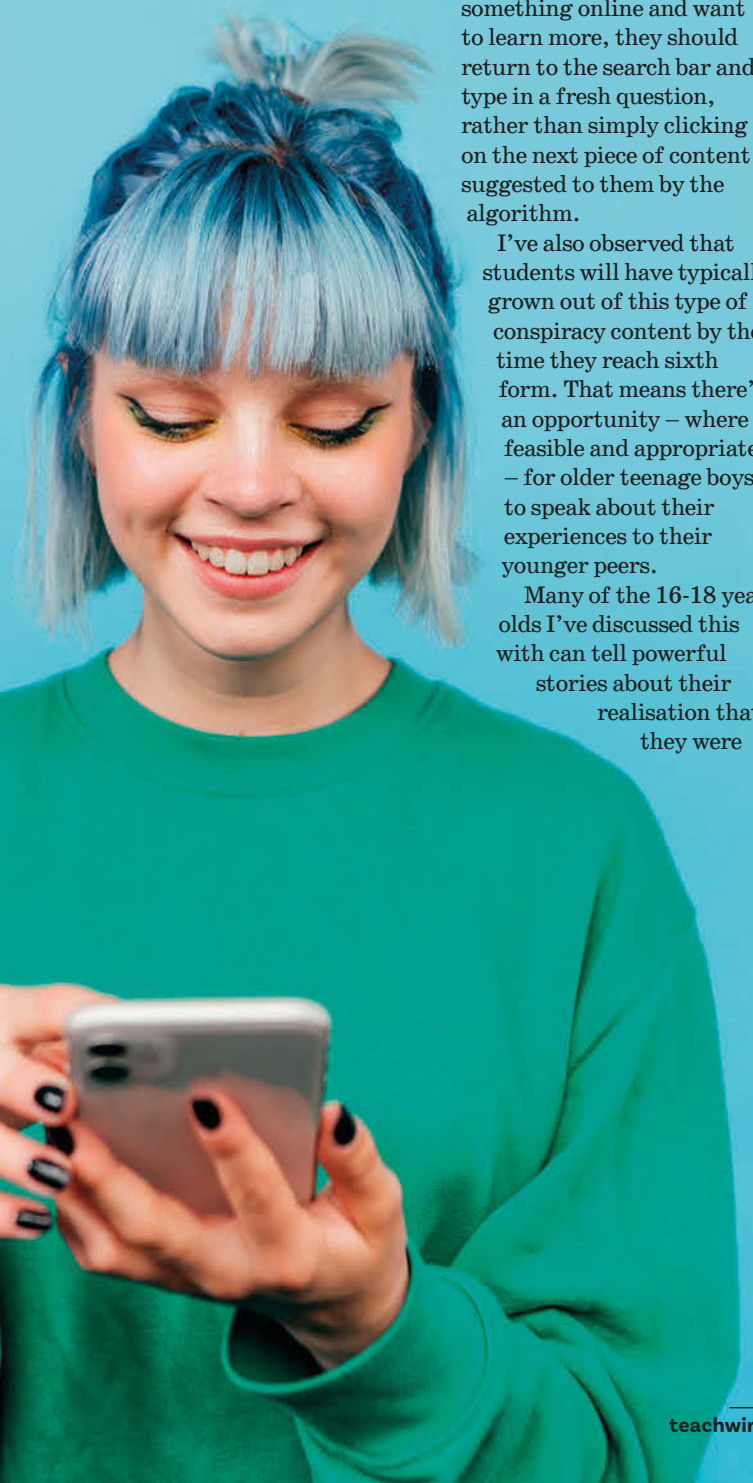
Emphasising the difference between correlation and causation is a good starting point. David Robert Grimes' book *The Irrational Ape* is great at explaining how humans can't deal with the terrifying random chaos of life and will seek to apply simple narratives to the world – hence our penchant for conspiracy theories and superstition.

Talk about the importance of looking up the original study being cited, and then checking whether said study had a good sample size and was peer reviewed. Young people should also be asking themselves, '*Who is making money out of this...?*'

The answer to that last question might not be immediately obvious. In a recent interview, the journalist and activist George Monbiot described how a certain very successful YouTuber regularly references alt-right conspiracy theories in his videos in order to increase traffic, and thus the money he makes from the platform. Since the content algorithms utilised by YouTube and other online platforms will push us towards increasingly

shocking or outrageous content, keywords associated with fringe views tend to enjoy an advantage.

One consequence of this, however, is radicalisation. Innocent searches for contentious terms and topics, such as 'feminism', can often lead users to extreme points of view in order to retain their engagement – something that boys are particularly vulnerable to. As detailed in Laura Bates' excellent tome *Men Who Hate Women*, boys as young as 12 have been inducted into the so-called 'manosphere' (online communities harbouring terrifyingly violent misogyny, racism and homophobia) via mainstream social media sites.



3. Avoiding the algorithms

One way of minimising this is to get young people into the habit of 'searching fresh'. This means that if they're reading or watching something online and want to learn more, they should return to the search bar and type in a fresh question, rather than simply clicking on the next piece of content suggested to them by the algorithm.

I've also observed that students will have typically grown out of this type of conspiracy content by the time they reach sixth form. That means there's an opportunity – where feasible and appropriate – for older teenage boys to speak about their experiences to their younger peers.

Many of the 16-18 year olds I've discussed this with can tell powerful stories about their realisation that they were on an 'alt right digital conveyor belt' and how they got themselves off it. In my opinion, it's a message that's a thousand times more effective coming from them.

A note here on Andrew Tate and his ilk. In my experience, there's little point in arguing about whether or not misogynistic content creators are objectively bad people. Their fans have already been primed to believe that any criticism of their idols is part of some wider conspiracy. There's also a growing trend whereby pupils ask their teachers questions on contentious topics, and then secretly record their response for uploading to social media.

When asked about Tate, I respond with the following (which readers are welcome to borrow):

'I understand that there are things about this person that you find appealing, even if I can't see them. You like him, and there's probably nothing I can say that would change your mind about that right now. I respect your right to an opinion.

However, what I will tell you is that I find Tate's views disgusting, dangerous and scary. This opinion is shared by every woman and girl I've spoken to about him. So, if you go around speaking or acting like Tate, just know that you will be seen as disgusting, dangerous and scary to a lot of the women and girls in your life.'

4. Responsible curation

Young people should see their social media as an art gallery, with themselves as the curator. A question as simple as '*What is it you're actually looking to get from your socials?*' or '*How does the content you see make you feel?*' can often be the pathway to getting them to consider who they follow and why.

You can also ask them to identify online role models and share them with the class, building up a list of good-value follows. These role models might discuss things in a more nuanced way, habitually check their sources or showcase diversity.

ACTIVITIES TO TRY

1 ADDICTION
Get pupils to write a list of questions they can ask themselves when their 'self-regulation alarm' goes off – e.g. '*What else do I have to do this evening?*' '*What will be the consequences if I carry on scrolling or playing?*'

2 SCIENTIFIC LITERACY
Ask pupils to raise their hand if they live in a house with an even number on the front door. Explain that those with their hands raised are, technically, more likely to get top grades in their exams. This is a good example of meaningless correlation.

3 CURATION
A free downloadable lesson plan is available from **natashadevon.com/resources**, containing a step-by-step guide to getting teens to assess the impact social media content is having on them and picking good role models to follow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Natasha Devon MBE visits schools all over the world delivering talks and conducting research on mental health, and is an ambassador for Glitch (glitchcharity.co.uk), which aims to end abuse of marginalised people online as well as teach digital literacy; her book *Clicks - How to Be Your Best Self Online* is available now (£9.99, Macmillan Children's Books)

Out of STEAM?

Are the days of incorporating an arts element into STEM teaching now behind us? **Hannah Day** charts the rise and apparent decline of an idea whose time now seems to have passed...

Education is known for its plethora of acronyms and rapid turnover of ideas and initiatives. A teaching trend can explode in popularity and become all the rage, only to rapidly fade from view in just a matter of years and be quickly supplanted by the next big thing.

One term that's arguably bucked the trend, however, is 'STEM'. This bundling together of science, technology, engineering and maths was intended to focus schools on the core skills perceived as being most valued in the modern workplace, and arguably first entered popular usage at some point around the early 2000s.

At the time, it was certainly true in the US (where the term originated) that workers with STEM-related degrees were out-earning their contemporaries, even in jobs that weren't directly related. The era also saw notable Stateside expansions of STEM-related industries, which came to be seen as a key component in the country's efforts to strengthen its economy.

Where the US goes, the UK often follows. STEM thus become a commonly used term across our education profession as well, to the extent that it arguably became the defining educational idea of the past two decades.

Just add art

For many, however, this focus on STEM lacked a vital component. Science, technology, engineering and maths were self-evidently going to be vital skills in a world increasingly shaped and influenced by technology – but not enough on their own.

Those calling for the arts to be incorporated into STEM teaching would cite various pieces of research showing how engagement with the arts led to increased understanding and ability boosts across all subjects.

After all, we've known for a long time that people who read regularly develop skills applicable to all areas of learning – from picking up a wider vocabulary, to being better able to understand and communicate ideas, engage with others' experience and carry out research of their own.

The thinking was simple enough – add in an art, and all other subjects will benefit. Hence 'STEAM'. So what happened next?

Fringe idea

Looking back from the vantage point of 2023, it's worth considering whether STEAM has ever meaningfully existed as a structure to build programs around, or if it was always destined to be a fringe idea perpetually overshadowed by its more high profile older brother. Did the sense of there being a need for creativity in every student's core program ever really take hold?

My first hint as to the answer was how hard it's been to find any STEAM-specific learning data. The term itself confounds search engines, which seem convinced that you've mistyped and insist on sending you to STEM-focused research data instead. It should be noted that there is actually some excellent STEAM research out there, but it's difficult to track down – thus making it less likely to be seen, read and acted upon.

> **"Did the sense of a need for creativity in every student's core program ever really take hold?"**

The other issue I've encountered is that publicly available information about STEAM is often explanatory – i.e. focused on what STEAM is and how schools can implement it – with relatively little data and analysis concerning individuals and organisations that have actively promoted it.

So I took the next logical step and headed to social media...

Stark divide

Here, at last, teachers came to my rescue. Many told me about the level of STEAM versus STEM provision at their schools, which seemed to reveal a fairly even split between schools promoting one or the other. There were some voices, however, who told me that despite the 'STEAM' headline, the focus in their schools remained mostly on STEM subjects.

Eventually, I found some numbers. Thanks to FFT Education Datalab statistician Natasha Plaister and her article 'The rise of STEAM' (see bit.ly/ts126-steam1), I able to discover, at least in part, where the UK really was in relation to STEAM teaching.

In the article, Plaister maps A Level and BTEC entries for 2017-21 in an effort to spot trends. So what do we find in terms of arts subjects? Art and design emerges as the clear frontrunner, maintaining entry numbers of 30,000 and above throughout this period. That's followed by media and film, albeit showing a sharp decline, particularly in 2018 and 2019. The remaining creative pathways – from dance to music and D&T to drama – all sit at 10,000 or fewer.

Compare these figures to the trends for STEM subjects and you see a significant difference. Maths entries sit at around 80,000 throughout the same time frame. Biology entries show an increase from 50,000 to 60,000, followed by chemistry, which grew from 45,000 entries to 50,000. Factor in lower, but still rosy numbers for physics, further maths and computer science, and it would seem that STEM subjects are in rude health.

A quick tally of just the

2021 data shows how stark the divide really is. While the combined number of creative entries that year totalled around 80,000, there were 84,000 entries for maths alone. Once all other STEM subjects are added in, you're looking at a combined figure of around 256,000 entries.

That said, this isn't an entirely fair comparison. The data presented in the article puts all STEM subjects together, while treating all creative subjects separately. There are also no numbers for engineering entries, while 'technology' courses could conceivably fall into either the creative or STEM subject camps.

Yet if we look again, the three main sciences when combined make up around 147,000 entries, while maths and further maths added together reach 97,000. That puts both well above the total number of arts entries. And that's before we even consider subjects such as environmental science and geology.

Unpacking the choices

It's a similar story for BTECs, which saw an estimated 12,000 entries in creative subjects versus 32,000 for STEM subjects.

Of course, none of this tells us about individual combinations. It may be that the country is awash with graduates who took one creative subject and two from the STEM list.

If we try looking at some of those combinations, D&T, maths and physics would appear to be the most common, followed by art and design with maths and physics. In third place is art and design with biology and psychology.

Things then become very hard to call. Which group does music technology belong to? What about single BTEC programs, many of which – even those on the creative side – involve a more applied, technical program of study?

What the data ultimately shows is that A Levels nationally have seen a slight increase in what we could call STEAM programs while BTECs have dipped by a similar amount. Yet overall, the numbers are very low, with a little over 20,000 opting for STEAM across both A Level and BTEC.

Blurred boundaries

After all that, it would appear that STEAM, following an initial leap into the educational consciousness, has failed to take hold. And in the absence of additional funding and promotion of the arts at all stages before FE study, that's unlikely to change.

The other takeaway lesson is that data can make things both clearer and harder to understand. It shows the limitations of saying one subject is just one thing. We all know that the boundaries between subjects can be blurred, with content from one field seeping easily into others, and that these can sometimes produce unexpected crossovers. Witness debates on evolution in biology, or the role AI can play in creating art.

Because isn't that the whole point of education – that all subjects are interrelated, and have a contribution to make to our collective understanding?

Whether we continue to talk about STEAM or not, it surely remains the case that a varied programme, interestingly and relevantly taught, must surely always win out over a narrow one.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College

STEAM IN NUMBERS

1,266

The number of 2021 entries for A Level D&T, maths and physics – the most popular STEAM combination

14,095

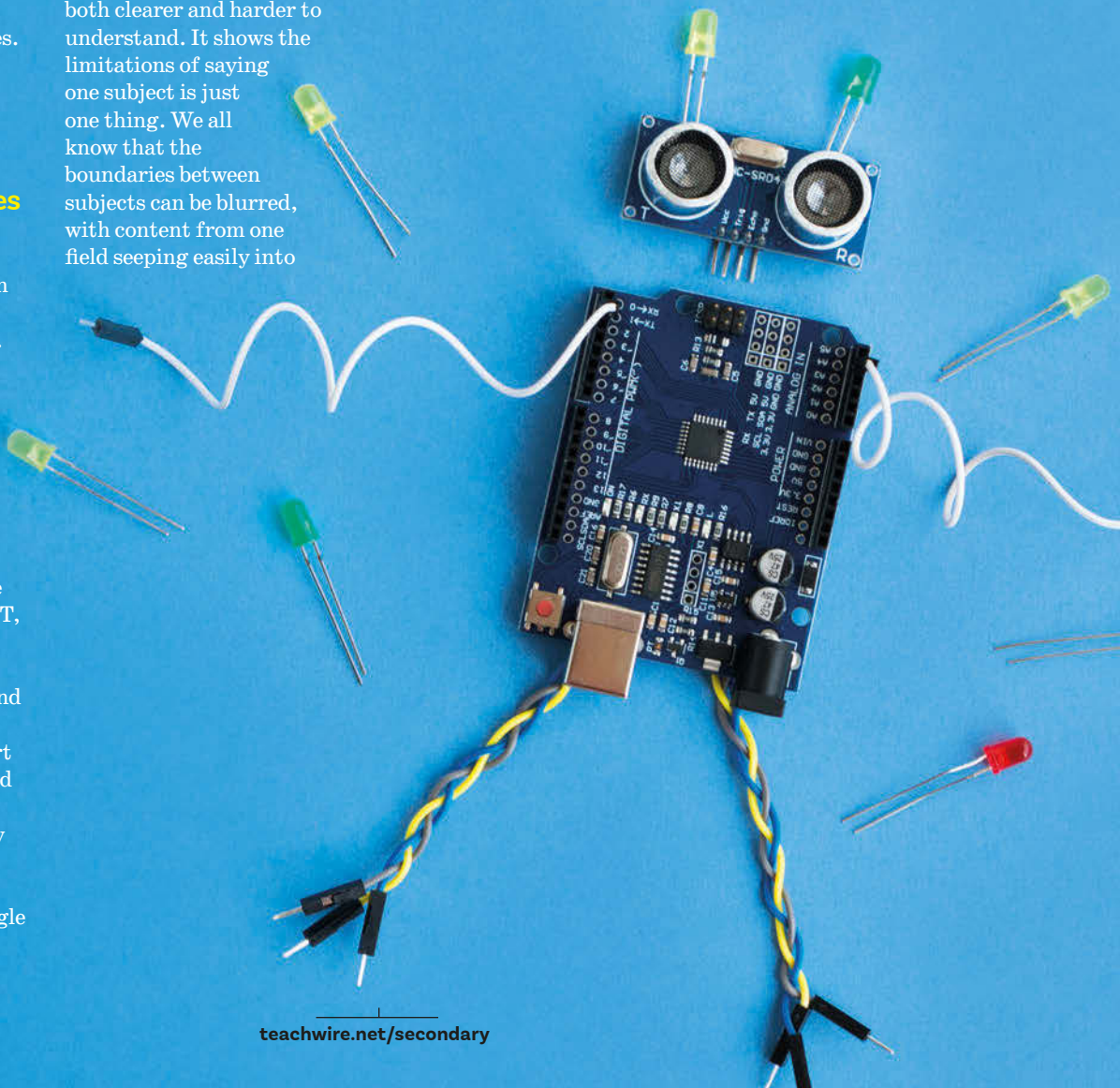
The number of 2021 entries for A Level biology, chemistry and maths – the most popular STEM combination

Source: FFT Education Datalab

-30%

Percentage decline in arts A Level entries from 2010 to 2020

Source: Cultural Learning Alliance



LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

CONTRIBUTORS

A.J. HARTLEY
Educator and author

DERRI BURDON
Chief Executive, Curious Minds

ROBIN LAUNDER
Behaviour management consultant and speaker

ADAM RICHES
Teacher, education consultant and writer

JUSTINE KENNY
National Director of People and Culture, Ormiston Academies Trust

ZEPH BENNETT
PE teacher and school achievement leader

Thinking about ...

LEARNING HOW TO FINISH

This will sound absurdly simplistic, but when I was doing my A Level in Medieval European History (in what now feels like the 14th century) I remember glancing anxiously at my teacher, Mr. Cruikshank, as I entered the exam room, hoping for a crucial concept pivotal to the period or any other words of wisdom. Instead, he just said, "*Finish the paper*."

I was underwhelmed, but did as I was told, and have been doing that ever since. If I say I'm going to do something, I do it. If I start a project, I finish it.

Yes, there have been times when the wheels have come off and I've abandoned something I was working on but generally, I power through – particularly with first drafts, which I write as quickly as I can before I get distracted, bored or swamped with other things.

I can't emphasize how important this is. That first draft might not be up to much, but it exists as an actual, complete *thing*. And editing or polishing a thing is infinitely easier than endlessly returning to fragments.

As I said, simplistic. But if I had a nickel for every young writer who has told me that they have half a dozen or more incomplete books on their hard drive, books which never get finished, I'd be shelling out for some pretty fancy dinners. Finishing stuff is *hard* – especially when you've worked on something for a long time and given the project time to evolve, slip outside its original genre or otherwise become something quite different. Be suspicious of such impulses, however – once they learn they can push you around, books will lead you on endless dances, forcing you to work and work, with nothing but scraps to show for it.

As an educator for most of my life, I've seen the rise of a 'process over product' approach to writing, which has supposedly helped authors free themselves of the need to be perfect first time. This is, I think, a good thing – though one negative consequence is the attendant idea that nothing is ever truly finished; that you can polish forever, and that no piece ever has to enter the world where it will be judged as a product. That, I think, is a problem.

I've seen too many students fall at the final fence, when their wonderful work-in-progress has to be treated as done and turned in. You can't build a career on partials. Deadlines are real, and determination can sometimes count for more than talent or skill. That's why the most beautiful words for a writer to type are often '*The End*.' Finish the paper. Then move on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
A.J. Hartley is an educator and *New York Times* bestselling author; his latest book, the YA fantasy *Hideki Smith: Demon Queller*, is available now (£8.99, UCLan Publishing)

WHY NOT TRY ... USING ART AS A WELLNESS TOOL

While the pandemic now occupies less space, what hasn't diminished is its significant and lasting impact on mental health, especially among young people. Alarmingly, research shows that nearly 400,000 children in the UK have since sought mental health support, with 80,226 children referred to Children and Young People mental health services – a 28% increase from pre-pandemic levels (see bit.ly/ts126-LL1).

Schools play a pivotal role in supporting students' mental health, however, and with the right tools and resources, they can lead the way on improving wellbeing across the nation.

While professional counselling and safeguarding protocols are important, one oft-overlooked approach is through arts and cultural education. In 2017, a Parliamentary report titled 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing' indicated that 82% of students experienced improved wellbeing through engagement with art. A briefing paper published by the Cultural Learning Alliance the following year then cited various studies showing how dance can improve physical health and self-esteem, while theatre, drama and group music making could improve young people's social skills and emotional wellbeing (see bit.ly/ts126-LL2).

Unfortunately, many schools aren't yet fully leveraging arts and culture within their offerings. A 2021 survey conducted by the Manchester-based wellbeing programme #BeeWell found that only 3.8 per cent of students in the local area had ever visited a gallery (see bit.ly/ts126-LL3) – a worryingly low figure for a region with so much artistic and cultural capital.

Embedding arts and culture within the curriculum is an effective way to increase children's exposure to the creative sector, thereby proactively supporting their mental wellbeing. Ways to approach this can include school trips to galleries or museums, for example, which may help students restore their independence and confidence to re-engage with civic society.

Creative outlets, such as after-school clubs, can also provide safe environments in which students are able to develop their creative skills at a deeper level, raising their aspirations. Carrying arts and cultural education through all years is vital if we want to see students build their creative agency and cultural capital, and set them up for a more fulfilled adulthood.

DERRI BURDON IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CURIOUS MINDS; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CURIOUSMINDS.ORG.UK OR FOLLOW @CURIOUSMINDSNW

DO THIS

RECRUIT PARENTS

EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

If a student is persistently misbehaving, never contact their parents (whether by phoning them or waiting by the school gate) just to have a moan. The parent is likely to get defensive or despondent, aggressive or aggrieved – which may in turn trigger similar responses in you.

Instead, establish contact with the aim of *making an ally*. Stay friendly, and begin by saying something positive about their child.

When you move on to describe the child's misbehaviour, don't make it sound like an attack. Remember, *you're talking about their child*, which means the potential for evoking powerful emotions is strong.

Finally, make sure you actually invite the parent's help – which is, after all, the reason for the chat. For instance, '*How can we move Darren on from this so he can get more out of school?*'

Together, you can then come up with a plan of action – and if your plan has the backing of the parent, it's much more likely to be successful.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – for more details, visit behaviourbuddy.co.uk

26%

of teachers say they do not like maths, with 3 in 10 teachers admitting they would feel anxious solving a maths problem in front of students

Source: YouGov survey commissioned by Renaissance Learning

The British Council recently published its latest 'Language Trends' report, the key findings of which will be encouraging for MFL departments – and German teachers in particular.

Drawing on responses from 586 state secondary schools and 155 independent schools, the report points to a significant boost in German's popularity. Firmly secure in its position as the third most studied curricular language at KS3, offered by 35.2% of state secondary respondents, the language seems especially popular in the independent sector, with 75% of responding independent schools offering German at KS3 and 79.5% at KS4.

However, French remains the most studied language by far, with 86.9% of state secondaries offering it at KS3, followed by Spanish, offered by 75.2%. In terms of teaching time dedicated to MFL, 57.6% of respondents reported allocating one to two hours per week of language learning in Y7, and 34.1% a more generous two to three hours.

For all the good news, however, the report also notes that only 10.7% of responding state schools reported that all of their pupils were taking a language GCSE – still some way short of the government's previously stated ambition for 90% of Y10s to be taking an MFL GCSE from September 2024.

The full report can be downloaded via bit.ly/3qpP1q2

YOUR GUIDE TO...

SOPHISTICATION

Heightening the sophistication of learners' responses is something many teachers will pull their hair out over. We all know that certain criteria are required for students to hit their assessment objectives in exams, but when we look at wider preparation for further education, the fundamentals of building sophistication are hugely important. Encouraging self efficacy around sophistication need not be complex.

Terminology

First and foremost, sophistication can be quickly amplified through use of the correct subject terminology at the appropriate time. A common misconception is that subject-specific terms alone add sophistication; young people can sometimes think that simply adding a complex term to every sentence amounts to them showing greater ability. Instead, teachers should pick key terminology and guide learners in applying it in moderation when appropriate. The sophistication and complexity comes from using the right terms in the right context.

Modelling

Don't shy away from exemplifying sophisticated language and concepts. It can feel uncomfortable to discuss complex concepts, as you don't want to leave anyone behind – but what's important is that you show learners how they can build sophistication in your subject.

Leading by example means learners will strive to meet your expectations with aspects of their responses. Accepting a basic response will ensure you get basic responses over and over. Emphasising phrasing, and showing learners what sophisticated looks like, will give them confidence to explore concepts in a different way.

Scaffolding

Throwing students in at the deep end is never a good idea. Build up sophistication gradually, one block at a time. Support learners with well-prepared resources, encourage recall of prior learning and give plenty of time over to chunked practice. Once you think learners are confident enough, get them to apply the ideas they have built up independently. Creating sustainable sophistication in responses is a process that must be layered up over time

ADAM RICHES IS A TEACHER, EDUCATION CONSULTANT AND WRITER

78%

of teachers have used generative AI or similar technologies to assist them with study-related work

Source: Censuswide research commissioned by the online learning platform Quizlet

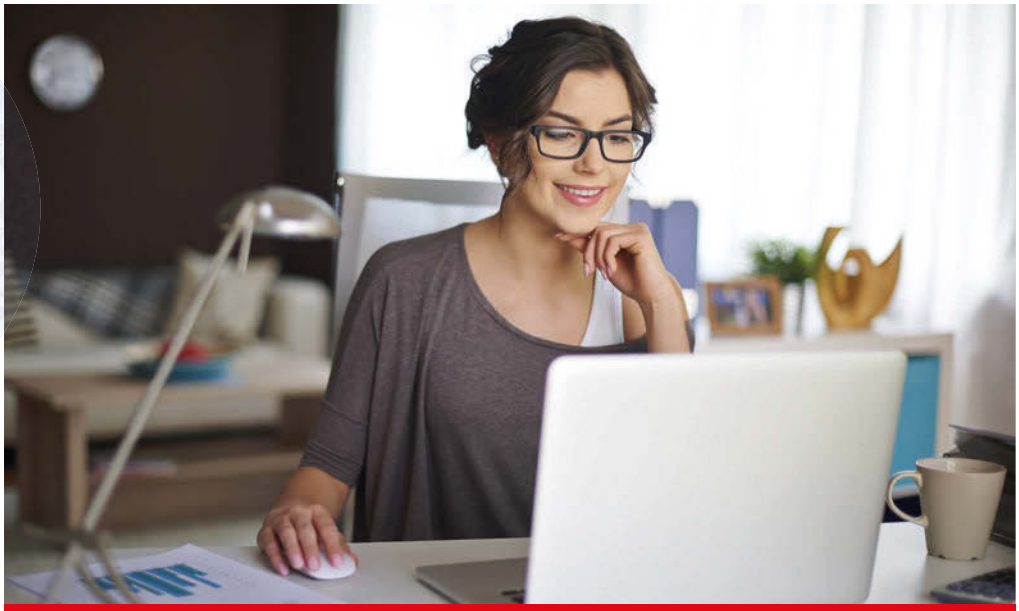
Need to know

New research from The Sutton Trust has shone a light on the experiences of disadvantaged students identified as being high attaining upon leaving primary school.

The organisation's 'Social Mobility: The Next Generation' report compares the GCSE outcomes of disadvantaged high attainers with those of similarly capable but less disadvantaged learners, and finds that the former group, on average, achieved GCSE grades more than three quarters of a grade lower per subject than the grades of the latter group.

The report goes on to note that 62% of non-disadvantaged high attainers received five or more grade 7-9 GCSEs in 2021, compared to 40% of disadvantaged high attainers. According to the researchers, 21% of disadvantaged high attainers agree with the statement '*People like me don't have much of a chance in life*', despite achieving high grades, and that the group are less than half as likely to receive private tutoring compared to other high attainers. They are, however, more likely to receive catch-up tutoring at school (26%, compared to 18% of other high attainers).

The full report can be downloaded via **bit.ly/ts126-LL4**



WHAT WE DO

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Flexible working skyrocketed during the pandemic, as companies and employees hastily adapted to a drastically changed landscape.

The Working Families Index 2022 found that 70% of respondents reported working flexibly in late 2021, compared with 55% in 2019 – though as Working Families points out, this flexibility has yet to be extended to many keyworker professions, notably teaching.

Enabling more flexible ways of working in the education sector will improve job experience and satisfaction, have a positive impact on staff wellbeing and promote equality across the workforce. This is why at OAT, we're committed to working with our academies, and the sector more broadly, to help roll out flexible working more widely. Flexible working will also help in tackling the recruitment and retention crisis, which is continuing to present the sector with huge challenges. The latest government figures reveal that 4,200 teachers retired in 2020-2021, while a further 32,000 left for other reasons. Meanwhile, the number of teacher vacancies increased from 1,600 in November 2021 to 2,300 in November 2022.

In response, the government recently embarked on a new initiative which will see ambassadors support leaders in implementing and embedding flexible working within their schools. Supported by the DfE and Capita, they will be known as Flexible Working Ambassador Multi-Academy Trusts and Schools (FWAMS).

FWAMS can offer bespoke support to MATs, mainstream primary and secondary schools, special schools, AP settings and PRUs. They will be able to give advice on a range of flexible working-related topics, including policy design, hiring practices and overcoming common issues, such as timetabling and budgeting.

Each FWAMS has their own region to lead, with Ormiston South Parade Academy – part of Ormiston Academies Trust – leading the North West region. As the FWAMS for the North West, the school has been tasked with recruiting other schools it can support during their implementation of more flexible working arrangements. This will begin with a webinar on 29th September, during which the academy will outline its flexible working journey and discuss positive examples of embracing flexible working practices.

OAT will support the academy throughout the scheme, and we'll also use the initiative ourselves to kickstart further change across our academies and central Trust, so that more of our staff members can benefit from flexible working.

Flexible working will ideally pave the way for a wider range of sector opportunities, with an emphasis on creating a happier, more productive and more equal workforce. It will take an holistic approach, and the concerted efforts of stakeholders across the sector, to properly address the recruitment and retention crisis – but this initiative is a great step.

Justine Kenny is National Director of People and Culture at Ormiston Academies Trust; for more information, visit ormistonacademiestrust.co.uk

On the radar

Is it real, or is it AI?

How good would you be at distinguishing between pupil-submitted work and submissions produced by generative AI? A recent focus group study carried out by the online training provider High Speed Training sought to put that to the test by enlisting 15 secondary school teachers in an experiment to see how they would fare when blindly reviewing responses to essay-based questions produced by ChatGPT and a group of three GCSE students.

With each teacher having been tasked with reviewing one AI answer and one student response, it emerged that three in five teachers struggled to identify at least one of the answers they were given, while a third incorrectly identified both.

A further component to the study then looked at whether a separate AI program – Google Bard, in this instance – could distinguish between AI- and student-submitted work with any greater accuracy. In the event, Bard misidentified a third, incorrectly identifying one human answer as having been given by AI, and misattributing two AI answers as being produced by humans.

Feedback gathered from the participants afterwards appeared to highlight five key giveaways of AI generated text – use of American English; an absence of personal case studies; use of advanced vocabulary beyond GCSE level (despite an AI prompt to answer in 'simplified language'); formulaic structures that addressed all points posed by a question (some of which the students would overlook); and a telltale lack of any spelling, grammar or punctuation errors.

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

GOOD COUNSEL

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy has published a 38-page guide aimed at school leaders. The 'School-based counselling' document covers best practice, and outlines the key expectations of such services across different contexts and funding streams.

bit.ly/3DTo4hw

TOP OF THE CLASS

As users of Microsoft Teams for schools may be aware, the package now includes a new app called Classmark to assist with lesson planning. Those needing a helpful primer on how it works might want to investigate an online text and video guide by services provider Cloud Design Box, which explores what the app is capable of and how teachers can get the most out of it.

bit.ly/3OBsQoT

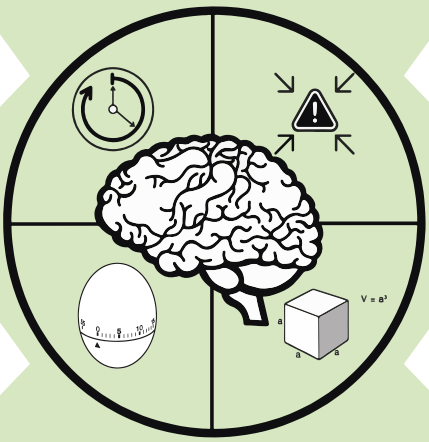
1 MINUTE CPD

WORKING MEMORY

BECAUSE YOU CAN ONLY JUGGLE SO MANY TASKS AT ONCE...

TEMPORARY STORAGE

FOCUSES ATTENTION



PROCESSES OVER A FEW SECONDS

DECODES INFORMATION

Working memory is the amount of information the brain can process at one time. Its capacity is limited to a few pieces of data, and the processing of this information can easily be overloaded.

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

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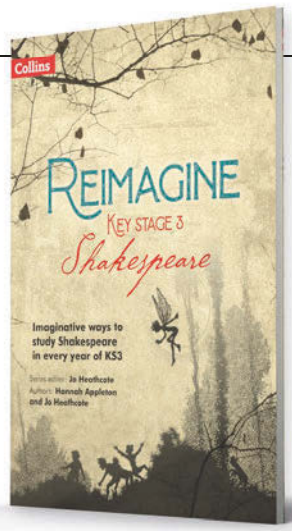
ENGLISH

Reimagine Key Stage 3 Shakespeare

A comprehensive set of lesson plans for teaching classic Shakespeare plays – one for each year of KS3



AT A GLANCE

- **Written by experienced classroom practitioners**
- **Covers three separate plays in detail**
- **Provides thoughtfully mapped-out lesson sequences**
- **Includes full lesson plans alongside other teaching resources**
- **Relates these classic works to present-day issues**

REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES

Who can deny the majesty of Shakespeare's writing? No one – it's not allowed. But whether you love him or only grudgingly respect him, he's got to be taught.

As a KS3 teacher, however, a significant hurdle remains. How to bring Shakespeare into the classroom in a way that will fire your students' imaginations while meeting the demands of the curriculum?

You could always study the plays yourself, of course; poring over scripts and spending hours filleting them in ways you hope will inspire your youngsters and do justice to his genius. Or you could do yourself a huge favour by drawing on the expertise and passion of people who have done most of the legwork for you – in this case, Jo Heathcote and Hannah Appleton. I know which option I'd choose.

Reimagine Key Stage 3 Shakespeare provides all you need to deliver a carefully plotted-lesson sequence for a whole play in each year of KS3. Y7 get to enjoy the magic of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For Y8, there's the drama of *The Merchant of Venice*, while Y9 get to unpick the passion and tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Each work is addressed as a six-week project. As you'd hope and expect, the detailed lesson plans draw on carefully chosen extracts as a vehicle for developing key skills such as comprehension, inference and character analysis. Themes are explored, and the beauty and craft of the Bard's language is highlighted and examined with all due reverence, but in a way that students should be able to relate to.

All this is further enriched by the inclusion of many suggestions for thought-provoking class discussions. I particularly like how each project builds towards tasks that challenge students to apply what they have learnt in stimulating and imaginative ways.

I know that long ago, when I was experiencing Shakespeare for the first time myself, I would have thoroughly enjoyed relating his themes to contemporary issues of the day – which in 2023 can include climate change. If that also meant writing my own speeches, drafting scripts for documentaries or creating my own podcast, then so much the better (not that anyone would have known what a 'podcast' was back then...)

Also worth noting is the impressive quantity of lesson essentials that are provided for you in the form of downloadable extracts, PowerPoint presentations and worksheets – all further accessible via editable formats, should you so desire.

Any teacher of literature will surely see this resource as both a pleasure and a mercy. Because indeed, as Portia so rightly tells us, '*The quality of mercy is not strain'd...*'

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Brings Shakespeare's works to life
- ✓ Students will enjoy the imaginative and engaging suggested activities
- ✓ Accessible and approachable, while at the same time being respectful of the source material
- ✓ Can help to reduce elements of teacher workload

PICK UP IF...

You want to teach Shakespeare's works in detail, in a way that's both inspiring and relatable for KS3 students.

Priced at £100; find out more at collins.co.uk/ReimagineKS3English

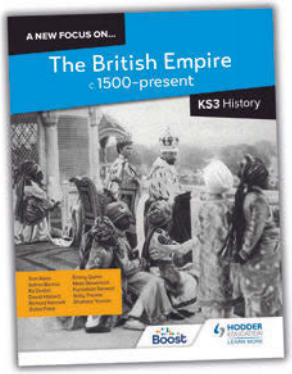
HISTORY

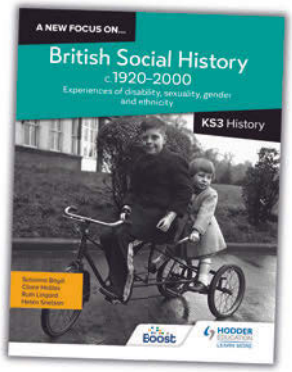
A new focus on... KS3 History

A trio of textbooks aiming to shed light on hitherto overlooked groups and people across multiple centuries and eras

AT A GLANCE

- **Designed to be flexible in use and easily integrated into existing schemes of work**
- **Produced in collaboration with historians, with a key focus on historiography**
- **Places an emphasis on diverse storytelling and rigorous scholarship**
- **Helps to develop pupil understanding and support teacher workload**





REVIEW BY: THOMAS FORBES

Hodder Education's *A new focus on...* series shows just how useful and important textbooks can be when done properly. Comprising three titles, each will likely find favour among history teachers keen to prioritise diverse historical narratives, but in a way that's meaningful, and which doesn't compromise on rigour or accuracy.

What makes these books instantly appealing is their sheer usability. Each one is carefully designed and written to support teachers' planning and curriculum development, in a way that does a great deal to reduce teachers' workload. As such, the three titles all have a tight focus and present a coherent story, alongside some shrewdly chosen sources.

None of this comes at the expense of robust scholarship, however, with each title providing frequent opportunities for students to engage with up-to-the-minute historiography, and practise their skills of historical enquiry across a range of topics.

Each title compiles new and instructive learning content regarding perspectives that many of us are eager to teach, but often wary of when it comes to deciding on where to start and where our focus should be.

First up is *British Social History c.1920–2000* – an exciting and fresh look at life in 20th century Britain that provides valuable insight into the lives and experiences of groups and individuals traditionally marginalised in historical narratives.

Exploring the experiences of groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations, important light is cast on the events of the period, giving students the chance to engage with hitherto unfamiliar sources and further develop their skills of enquiry.

Black Lives in Britain c.1500–present, meanwhile, is the first school textbook of this century to focus solely on the history of Black people in Britain. It contains a superb selection of unique source material for students to engage with, while incorporating this into rigorous, in-depth and thematically sound enquiry.

Readers are introduced to a host of individual Black lives spanning different periods from 1500 to the present, and invited to explore the historical concepts of causation and significance in order to shed light on their stories in often profound ways. The book's well-chosen site enquiries also enable students to appreciate the significance of place, and provide rich accounts of the events experienced by Black communities in places such as London, Bristol and Cardiff.

Lastly, while *The British Empire c.1500–present* tackles arguably the most established of the series' topics, it does so from the perspectives of those who were colonised, providing a robust foundation upon which pupils can build new understanding. In common with the two other titles in the series, there has been extensive input from academic historians – still a rarity with KS3 textbooks. The book's structure further lends it a wonderful flexibility that lets teachers choose whether to teach the content chronologically, geographically or thematically.

VERDICT

✓ Superbly easy to plan and teach from
✓ Smartly emphasises the importance of historical thinking and associated skills
✓ A must-have for any diverse history curriculum

UPGRADE IF...

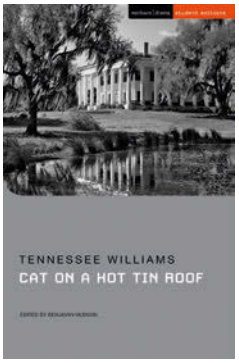
You want to expand the scope of your curriculum, but are wary of ending up with disjointed and tokenistic end results. Hodder Education clearly understands and appreciates the challenges history teachers face in this area, and has responded with a set of admirably compelling and accessible textbooks.

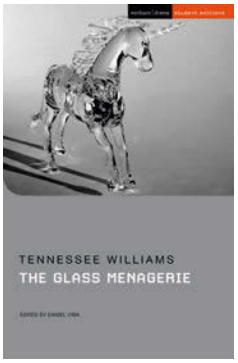
Find out more at hoddereducation.co.uk/new-focus-teach-secondary

ENGLISH / DRAMA

Methuen Drama Student Editions – Tennessee Williams

Two of Tennessee Williams's most celebrated plays, packed with informative extras





AT A GLANCE

- **Useful, numbered notes explaining cultural references**
- **Detailed chronology of Williams, his works and significant productions**
- **Highly informative introductions written by American academics**
- **Provides valuable contextual insights**

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

For teachers of English Literature and Drama, Tennessee Williams barely needs an introduction. His reputation, acclaim and cultural relevance make him a prime choice for study.

Now, Methuen Drama has published two of his works in a helpful, user-friendly format that's likely to be welcomed by students and teachers alike.

The Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is among Williams' most popular and enduring plays, and is reported to have been his favourite. Penned between 1953 and 1955, it's a lyrical, yet impactful and hard-hitting tragedy set in the home of a life-limited cotton tycoon in the USA's Deep South. Unsurprisingly, given the play's period setting, it deals with a plethora of issues, from death, greed and self-loathing to social pretensions and racial injustice.

Williams' earlier memory play, *The Glass Menagerie*, was arguably his breakthrough piece. First performed in 1944, it is built upon autobiographical foundations like much of his work, and is similarly set in the Deep South. Issues touched upon in the play include gender roles, lust, frustration and the constraints of family duty.

We don't really need to delve into the plot minutiae here. What teachers will want to know is whether these editions will help their students. And the short answer is – yes, *hugely*.

As well as containing the full scripts of each play, both editions include copious footnotes to explain assorted obscure details, cultural references and so forth. That's to be expected, but what I particularly liked were the hugely informative extras at the beginning, penned by academic experts.

Both editions provide detailed chronologies of key events relevant to their respective plays, covering everything from Williams' birth, life and death in 1983, right up to recent revivals. The extensive introductions provide a great deal of background information, such as the influence of Williams' sexuality, and the cultural context in which he was writing. For all its smiling family values and kitchen-appliance-conformity, 1950s America was not a very pleasant or tolerant place.

Something I found particularly absorbing with these editions were the discussions of how the plays speak to the current political climate and resonate with recent events – particularly *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* from our post-COVID perspective.

These Methuen Drama Student Editions should go some way towards helping students better understand the contexts in which the plays were written, and how dramatic and theatrical traditions develop over time.

Will they guarantee exam success? I don't imagine Methuen Drama would want to be held to that promise – but as Brick observes at the end of Cat, "*Wouldn't it be funny if that was true?*"

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Clear, student-friendly layouts with plenty of signposting
- ✓ Highly informative supplementary information that explores the background of the plays' creation and initial reception
- ✓ A willingness to embrace and explore both plays' contemporary relevance
- ✓ Helps teachers fulfil key GCSE objectives

PICK UP IF...

You want to provide your students with a thorough, well-informed and culturally insightful experience of classic 20th century American drama, while maintaining a clear focus on meeting GCSE objectives.

Find out more at bloomsbury.com/student-editions

REVISION

Cambridge Nationals Exam Practice Workbooks

A supportive and wide-ranging resource aimed at those studying for the Cambridge Nationals certificates

AT A GLANCE

- **A series of workbooks focused on exam practice for Level 1/Level 2 subjects**
- **Helps pupils progress independently and build self-efficacy**
- **Developed by subject specialists**
- **Calibrated to be as accessible as possible for all young vocational pupils**
- **Priced at £5.99 per title**

REVIEWED BY: ELISSA RICHES

Hodder Education's series of student-focused exam practice workbooks are streamlined and hugely effective for building knowledge and understanding, as well as student confidence, in the run-up to exams or throughout the course for these Level 1/Level 2 subjects.

Written by subject specialist experts, the content is second to none, with Sport Studies, Engineering Design, Creative iMedia and Enterprise and Marketing among the qualifications covered.

What instantly stands out is just how student-centric the series is. From the overall layout to specific design choices and selection of activities, they're perfectly pitched at learners aged 14-16.

There's a clear understanding of precisely who the audience for these workbooks are, and the kind of tone that said audience will likely respond well to.

The phrasing and language is respectful, without coming across as complex or alienating, resulting in a well thought out and carefully considered standard of presentation. Each book is designed to develop learners' ability to retrieve information via a range of recall activities in each topic area. These are well-suited to use in lessons, but can be equally effective when tackled by students at home and employed as self-motivated revision resources.

It's this versatility that makes the books such a strong resource. Aspects of them can be teacher-led, or learners can engage with their tasks independently.

However they end up being used, the Cambridge Nationals Exam Practice Workbooks will help to reinforce learners' understanding and boost their confidence levels through a combination of both short-answer and extended-response, exam-style practice questions.

The books also include guidance on how learners can break those questions down, and plan and review their answers – a set of skills that's hugely important for success in Level 1/Level 2 assessments.

It's this level of intricacy that adds so much value to these resources. In a way, each book encourages learners to think in the way the exam requires them to think, essentially training them to effectively and efficiently approach seemingly complex questions with confidence.

We all know how important it is to chunk material – what the creators of these titles have managed to do is chunk key aspects of the examinations into digestible parts, just as any capable teacher would.

Also of note is the inclusive nature of the series. Whether a student happens to be emerging or excelling, the books will be able to actively support their progress through each subject.

Hodder Education has really got it right with this series. These workbooks will prove to be a huge asset to learners and teachers alike.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

✓ All content is well-mapped and easy to navigate
✓ Tasks are thoughtfully linked to the subject matter
✓ The sequential, chunked material facilitates sustainable progress
✓ Styled and designed to appeal to students aged 14-16

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for exceptionally well-designed and written revision content for the **Cambridge National Level 1/Level 2 subjects**.

Find out more at hoddereducation.co.uk/cambridge-nationals-resources

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor while running a tutoring service, and author of the book **The Successful (Less Stressful) Student** (Outskirts Press, £11.95); find out more at **prep4successnow.wordpress.com** or follow **@johninpompano**

THE LAST WORD

Variety is the spice...

Instead of forcing all students down the same narrow academic paths, let's realise the true potential of school choice and let a multitude of flowers bloom, urges **John Lawson**...

If there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that every child is a unique individual with their own set of needs. So it surely follows that parents deserve at least some measure of choice over the type of school their children attend.

One size never fits all – especially in secondary education, when teens are about to embark on distinct career paths that will shape the rest of their lives. Our task must be to identify and nurture children's natural strengths and challenges as soon as we can. Leaving it to KS4 is far too late.

Loaded assertions

The ability to choose between secondary schools was the metaphorical baby thrown out with the bathwater amid the education reforms that took hold in the 1970s and beyond. I'd maintain that comprehensive schools – even excellent ones – are not best suited all children. That's a loaded and fiercely defended assertion tied to an 'egalitarian' ideology.

It's perhaps more accurate to observe that those who excel in comprehensives would better suited to grammar schools. If they went to grammar schools instead, would that not enable other comprehensive students to place higher in their classes and gain greater confidence?

I've also yet to see any hard evidence of teenagers in regions where grammar schools flourish being irreparably traumatised by their 'failure' to be academic high-fliers. If indeed they are, then how are these children going to cope with daily setbacks that challenge us all once they reach adulthood?

We have to remember that teenagers can be incredibly resilient – though we must also dismiss the demeaning 'smarties vs. dummies' mentality that some adults carelessly perpetuate. Speaking personally, I've never encountered a talentless child.

Token choices

Yet even now, after decades of governments promoting the importance of parental choice in where their children attend school, the picture can be bleak. Two close friends of mine, with children currently in Y6, have complained to me of the token choice they have between two barely distinguishable comprehensives in their area which apparently both provide a 'broad and balanced curriculum'.

I would wager that their experience echoes that of many other parents across the country. What if they're uninspired by their choice of local schools because the test scores of both are historically low and their record on behaviour is troubling? What if these parents – who, after all, will know their children better than anyone – believe they'll never find a predominantly academic timetable stimulating?

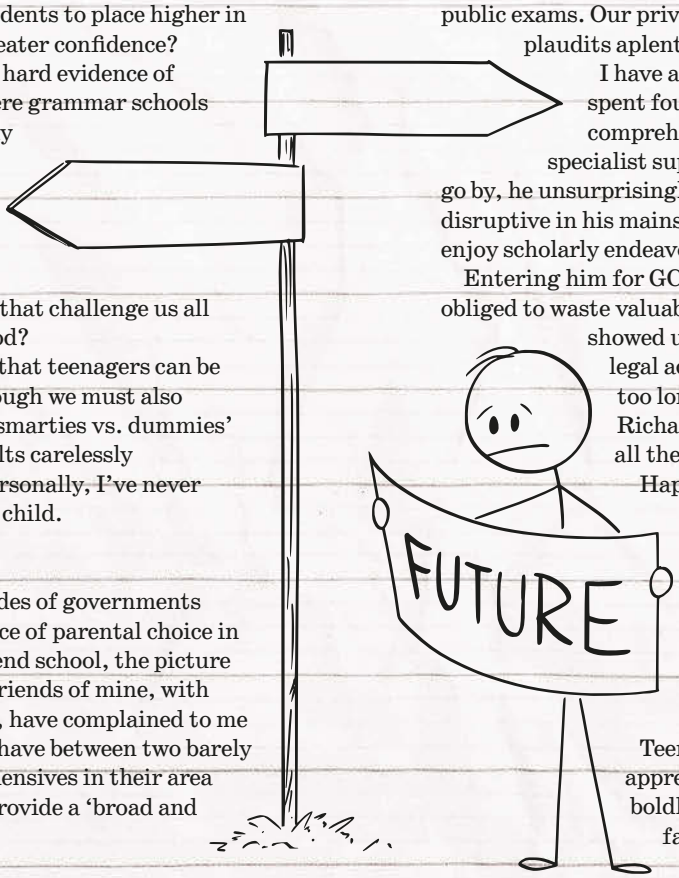
This has been, and always will be the case for thousands of teenagers. What can their local school offer them? For many teens, learning how to study, acquire skills and build self-confidence will always be more critical than grappling with GCSEs. Nothing should take precedence over learning how to love learning.

Rejuvenated schools

As a country, do we have the courage and vision to embrace change? Italian teenagers get to choose between artistic, scientific or classic styles of schooling. Germany provides opportunities to pursue apprenticeships at a far earlier stage than here. In the USA, around 70% graduate without taking public exams. Our private and outlier state schools attract plaudits aplenty; our comprehensives, less so.

I have a neurodivergent nephew, Richard, who spent four years at a reasonably good state comprehensive, yet he still can't read. With specialist support becoming ever rarer as the years go by, he unsurprisingly became frustrated, bored, angry, and disruptive in his mainstream classes. Some students naturally enjoy scholarly endeavours. Richard didn't.

Entering him for GCSEs was pointless, yet the school was obliged to waste valuable resources by doing so. He rarely showed up for Y11, and the LEA's threats of legal action created unnecessary stress. For too long, narrow schooling obstructed Richard's wider education. Despair consumed all the hopes and dreams he should have had.



Happily, he is now a respected and trusted tradesman, but only because friends and family loved and supported him. He can't read, but loves learning. Many teens would excel in rejuvenated schools that enthusiastically embrace the arts, trades or sports. Academic work doesn't have to shape every child's life.

Teenagers always fare better when they appreciate and enjoy school. It's time to boldly rethink secondary education and offer families more meaningful choices.

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