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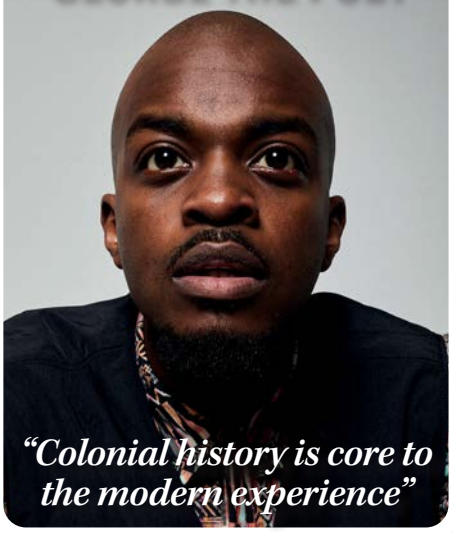
INTERVIEW

GEORGE THE POET



"Colonial history is core to the modern experience"

READY ... OR NOT?

The trouble with teacher training

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THE DAVID SAINSBURY GALLERY

FROM THE EDITOR

"Welcome...

A couple of months ago, '*School buildings are crumbling*' was the kind of flippant generalisation one might throw out there when making a point about the underfunding of education in England, and the broader neglect and mismanagement of the country's public infrastructure.

Even where this was genuinely the case, schools weren't *actually* falling down. I mean, sure, there was that 2018 'ceiling incident' at a school in Kent, but it's not like we'd allow kids to be taught in buildings where there was an imminent threat of the walls collapsing in on themselves...

...which is why a number of schools across the country suddenly saw a chaotic start to the 2023/24 academic year, after it became clear over summer that structures made using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete were liable to fail faster and more dramatically than had previously been thought. COVID-hardened SLTs and teaching staff were once again able to perform organisational miracles and rapidly reconfigure their school estates to include the use of temporary classrooms, but there's no denying that this has otherwise been a sorry episode.

Beyond the pressing questions of how the RAAC issue was allowed to fester for so long, which Carl Smith eloquently picks apart on page 33, I've been thinking about if and how the RAAC controversy is likely to preoccupy the wider public consciousness in the long term. Writing these words in late September 2023, it already feels as though the issue is fast becoming 'another news story' that will inevitably be swept away by the unceasing deluge of intensely discussed, yet speedily forgotten outrages, failures and blunders that make up so much of the contemporary news agenda.

People *were* warned. Schools across the country, or at least parts of them, have been closed, with profound disruptions to pupils' education. The public purse has been presented with yet another huge expense on top of all the others we can apparently barely afford.

The education profession will still be talking about it a year from now – in meetings to decide where the emergency inspection teams can park their cars, probably – but can the same be said for the wider public, and particularly the parents of your students?

I hope so. The RAAC story says too much about how the education sector in this country, and the people within it, have been neglected and taken for granted for it to be memory-holed by our voracious, yet seemingly amnesiac media consumption habits. That it was ever allowed to happen should never be forgotten.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:

Jennifer Wozniak-Rush is an assistant headteacher for teaching and learning

Matt MacGuire is a deputy headteacher

Charlotte Lander is a teacher specialising in English and psychology

Thomas Forbes-Whitehead is a history teacher

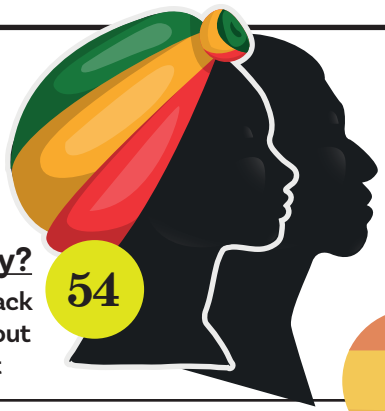
Dr Shirley Lawes is a lecturer in MFL at UCL Institute of Education

Michael Chiles is a vice principal and author

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

Essential reading:

38 **Boy trouble**
Why we mustn't overlook the struggles of male students



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We can celebrate Black History Month without being limited by it

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OCT/NOV '23

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THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED *teacher's guide to...*

STARFIELD

Yes folks, another new video game *du jour* has dropped, with many of your students likely to be all abuzz about *Starfield*. So what's that then?

Well, it's an Xbox and PC game best described as '*Skyrim* in space.' Okay, let's back up a bit. *Skyrim* was a game originally released in 2012 that dropped you into an ersatz-Tolkien fantasy realm and basically left you to it. Follow the main story quest, go explore, get a job, chop down as many trees as you can – it's your call. *Starfield* is that, but set amid the cosmos, complete with spaceships, different planets, alien races and all the other trad sci-fi trappings you'd expect.

Like many games these days, it's designed to be a terrifying time sink – albeit one that will somehow coax its 14-year-old players to demonstrate a remarkably advanced grasp of spatial reasoning when manoeuvring their spaceships of choice, snap decision-making when mulling over what items to keep in their inventory and mental arithmetic when navigating the in-game economy.

All of which will, of course, instantly disappear the moment they enter your classroom and take their seats...

DO SAY
"Unlock the 'Targeting Control Systems' skill"

DON'T SAY
"I hate Mondays"

BEAT THE BUDGET

What are we talking about?

BH365 by The Black Curriculum

Who is it for?

KS3/4

What's on offer?

A 96-page PDF document containing ideas and lesson prompts to help teach Black British history throughout the year

How might teachers use the resources?

The material contained in the BH365 document is divided into 31 'days', each briefly summarising a notable individual, group or development within Black British history with external links to further information and sources. The summaries could form the basis of short daily activities mapped to Black History Month, or as a source of teaching ideas throughout the academic year.

Where is it available?

bit.ly/ts127-NL1

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"There are around 22,000 schools in England and the important thing to know is that we expect that 95% of those schools won't be impacted by this."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak commenting on the RAAC crisis ('5%' in this context equating to around 1,100 schools being affected)

Think of a number...

74%
of parents feel it's crucial for children to have a phone when they start secondary school
Source: One Poll survey of 1,000 parents commissioned by Vodafone UK

41%
of secondary schools in England had, or were expecting an in-year deficit in 2022/23
Source: 'Cost-of-living crisis: Impact on schools – School Provision' report by NFER

54
Average number of hours teachers report working each week (13 of which fall outside the standard school day)
Source: NASUWT

ONE FOR THE WALL

"We build too many walls and not enough bridges"

Sir Isaac Newton

In absentia

The policy consultancy firm Public First has published an eye-opening report that suggests parental attitudes towards full-time school attendance have undergone a 'profound breakdown' in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an effort to understand why overall absence has increased by 50% since 2019, researchers organised a series of focus groups with parents across the country from a range of backgrounds. From these, it emerged that parents had become less convinced by the notion that their children should be required to attend school each day.

The report points to several possible factors behind this shift in attitudes. The most significant appeared to be families' experiences of pandemic-era school closures, but researchers also heard accounts of breakdowns in communication between schools and parents across different socioeconomic groups; a rise in mental health difficulties among their children; and growing acceptance among their social groups and communities that taking family holidays during term-time could be justified.

The researchers notably didn't find evidence to suggest that the growing popularity of working from home was a driver behind drops in school attendance. They did, however, conclude that parents are perceiving school attendance systems and sanctions to be increasingly draconian, yet inaccurate, further undermining trust between families and school staff.

The report can be downloaded in full via **bit.ly/ts127-NL2**

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

THE SPEECH:

Education Secretary addresses Parliament on RAAC in education settings

WHO? Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education
WHERE? House of Commons
WHEN? 4th September 2023

"My department alerted the sector about the potential risks of RAAC in 2018, following a sudden roof collapse at a primary school.

We published a warning note with the Local Government Association which asked all responsible bodies to 'identify any properties constructed using RAAC' and to 'ensure that RAAC properties are regularly inspected by a structural engineer'.

In February 2021 we issued a guide on how to identify RAAC, concerned that not all responsible bodies were acting quickly enough. In 2022, we decided to take a more direct approach. We issued a questionnaire to responsible bodies for all 22,000 schools to ask them to identify whether or not they had, or suspected, RAAC.

Responsible bodies have submitted responses to the questionnaire for 95% of schools with blocks built in the target period. In September 2022, we started a programme where DfE sends a professional surveyor to assess whether RAAC is present.

Previous DfE guidance was to grade RAAC as critical or non-critical, and only take buildings out of use for critical RAAC cases.

Such was the level of our concern however, I asked officials to seek further evidence of risks, including to non-critical RAAC.

It is because of this proactive approach that we discovered details of three new cases over the summer, where RAAC that would have been graded as non-critical had failed without warning. The first of these was in a commercial setting. The second was in a school in a different educational jurisdiction.

And in this instance the plank that failed remained suspended, resting on a steel beam. As the plank was fully intact, the DfE engineers were able to investigate the situation. In their professional judgement the panel affected would have been previously rated as 'non-critical.' Then a third failure of RAAC panels occurred, at a school in England in late August. This was a panel that had previously been graded as non-critical. Because children's safety is our absolute priority, it was right to make the difficult decision to change our guidance for education settings, so that areas previously deemed to contain non-critical RAAC are now being closed."

20-21 NOVEMBER 2023 EdTech World Forum 2023 | 23 NOVEMBER 2023 Positive Dyslexia Conference | 24-26 JANUARY 2024 Bett

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.

23 NOVEMBER 2023

Positive Dyslexia Conference
Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool
positivedyslexia.co.uk/events

A specialist conference aimed at sharing best practice and ideas in the areas of dyslexia and neurodiversity, visiting SENCos, teachers and TAs can expect to pick up plenty of practical guidance and advice on techniques they can use support learners in their settings and help them reach their full potential.

24-26 JANUARY 2024

Bett
ExCeL London
uk.bettshow.com

After a brief post-COVID move to March, this long-running showcase of education specialists, products and service providers is once again back to its familiar January spot on the event calendar. As well as the sizeable exhibition space and packed speaker schedule familiar to Bett regulars, this year will see the addition of edtech tutorials and working groups aimed at educators.

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TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Winning hands down

I was once timetabled to teach a Y8 group on Monday afternoons, and to describe them as 'lethargic' would be an understatement.

One day, by now thoroughly fed up with their continued lack of engagement, I pointedly said to them, "*What do you expect me to do to get your interest – cartwheels around the classroom?*" To which one student boldly replied, "*Go on, then.*"

Since there wasn't room to actually perform full cartwheels without risk of injury, I told them that I would walk on my hands down the middle of the classroom. Having now got everyone's attention, I duly emptied my trouser pockets, carefully found my balance and then proceeded to walk on my hands down the middle of the room to startled applause. From then on, they were always a very attentive class...

Tabled motion

I remember hearing about an Ofsted inspector who entered a primary classroom and sat down at one of the children's worktables.

The child nearest to him asked him if he was an Ofsted inspector, to which he replied that he was. The boy then asked him if he intended to do some writing, to which the inspector again replied in the affirmative.

The boy then asked a third question: "*Will you be writing in joined-up handwriting?*" in a calm, measured tone the inspector replied, "*Yes, I will be.*" To which the child responded rather more forcefully, "*Well, you're on the wrong table then!*"

Child 1, Ofsted Inspector 0.

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

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#26 ODD ONE OUT

Decide which of the objects below you think is the odd one out.

Say why.

There are no right or wrong answers, but you need thoughtful reasons based on what you can see in the pictures.

Get Into Film

In addition to helping schools realise the learning potential of the cinematic medium, the education charity Into Film also hosts the annual Into Film Festival – the largest free youth film festival anywhere in the world.

With November 2023 marking the organisation's 10th anniversary, this year's event promises to be extra special. Between 7th and 24th November, Into Film will once again be giving 5- to 19-year-olds the opportunity to experience the magic of the big screen for free at thousands of film screenings around the country, as well as organising special events and Q&As with the artists behind some of the films being shown.

As ever, the Festival's screenings of curriculum-linked films will be accompanied by learning resources aimed at primary and/or secondary teachers, depending on the titles in question. Visitors can also expect to find multiple SEND- and autism-friendly screenings, alongside a larger selection of screenings for hearing impaired audience members compared to previous years.

Highlights among this year's programme include recent box office hits *Oppenheimer* and *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. A partnership with the the Anti-Bullying Alliance will commence proceedings with a premiere in Nottingham of the documentary *Your Fat Friend* (pictured above), followed by a Q&A with the film's director, Jeanie Finlay.

For more information and booking details, visit intofilm.org/events/festival

Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Rachel Lofthouse @DrRLofthouse

How about this ... Ofsted school inspections are paused for 3 yrs. Inspectors are seconded into schools for teaching roles. DfE uses funding to employ building safety inspectors. Every school guaranteed a full structural survey instead.

Vic Goddard @vicgoddard

So another change in Children's Minister who has responsibility for SEND. 7 ministers have come and gone since the SEND Review (2019) with no progress. So the reforms that are so badly needed are once again kicked down the road.

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[MATHS PROBLEM]

FINDING THE *n*th TERM

Students are often confused about how to find the *n*th term of a sequence of numbers, notes Colin Foster

In this lesson, students compare various multiplication tables that are shifted by different amounts

THE DIFFICULTY

Can you find me a linear sequence that satisfies each of these statements?

a. The 5^{th} term is 11
b. The 7^{th} term is 15
c. The 2^{nd} term is 10

*Can you find **more than one** example for each of the statements?*
*Now, can you find me a linear sequence for which **two** of these statements are true? Can you find me a linear sequence for which **all three** of these statements are true?*

By trial and error, students may be able to find examples of some of these, but they will probably not find this very easy!

a and b are true for the sequence 3, 5, 7, 9, ... $(2n + 1)$
b and c are true for the sequence 9, 10, 11, 12, ... $(n + 8)$
a and c (difficult!) are true for the sequence
$9\frac{2}{3}$, 10, $10\frac{1}{3}$, $10\frac{2}{3}$ ... ($\frac{1}{3}n + 9\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{n+28}{3}$)

THE SOLUTION

Why do we call this sequence below, $4n$? What would the sequence $5n$ look like?

4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, ...

Students should realise that if $4n$ is the 4-times table (i.e., the family of multiples of 4), then $5n$ will be the 5-tables table.

What would the sequence $4n + 1$ look like and why?

This is harder. Students probably won't make the mistake of thinking that it's the 5-times table, because they have just seen that the 5-times tables is $5n$. They could try replacing n by different term numbers to calculate different terms in the $4n + 1$ sequence to see what it looks like. Eventually someone will say, "It's one more than the 4-times table," or "It's the the 4-times table, but shifted on by 1". Placing a dot on a number line or graph for each term of the sequence might be helpful.

What would the sequence $4n + 2$ look like?
What would the sequence $4n + 3$ look like?
What would the sequence $4n + 4$ look like?

With these questions, students may say that $4n + 4$ is "The 4-times table again!" – which is correct, except that the first multiple of 4 (i.e., 4 itself) is missing: 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28...

Continue asking students:
What would the sequence $4n + 40$ look like?
What would the sequence $5n + 1$ look like?
What would the sequence $5n + 3$ look like?
What would the sequence $5n - 1$ look like?
What would the sequence $5n - 3$ look like?
What would the sequence $-5n$ look like?
What would the sequence $1 - 5n$ look like?
What would the sequence $3 - 5n$ look like?
What would the sequence $\frac{1}{2}n$ look like?
What would the sequence $\frac{1}{2}n + 1$ look like?

We call these sequences 'linear' (or 'arithmetic') because they go up (or down) in a constant amount.

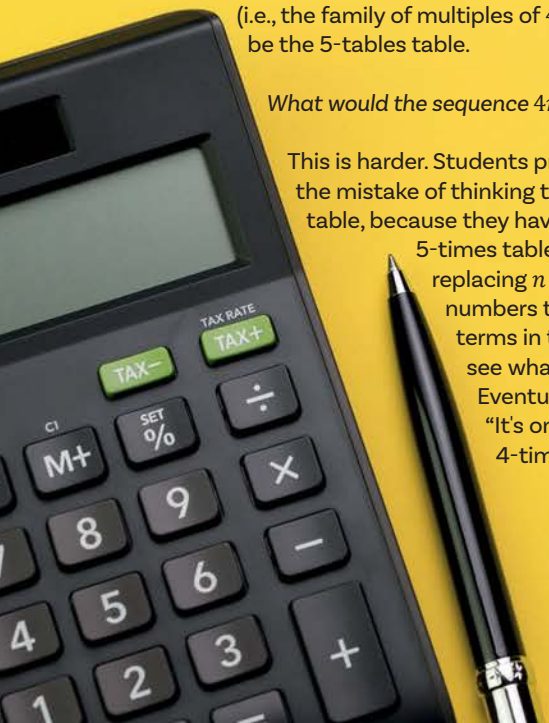
Write a summary of what the family of linear sequences looks like. What would the sequence $an + b$ look like? Be specific.

We call the expressions that describe sequences "the nth term" because they tell us what the term in the nth position would be equal to.

Checking for understanding
Find the nth term for each of these linear sequences. Start by deciding which times-table (family of multiples) they are related to.

10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, ...
13, 23, 33, 43, 53, 63, ...
6, 13, 20, 27, 34, 41, ...
–1, –3, –5, –7, –9, –11, ...
2, 1, 0, –1, –2, –3, ...
$5\frac{1}{4}$, $5\frac{1}{2}$, $5\frac{3}{4}$, 6, $6\frac{1}{4}$, $6\frac{1}{2}$, ...

The answers are: $10n$; $10n + 3$; $7n - 1$; $1 - 2n$ (or $-(2n - 1)$); $3 - n$; $\frac{1}{4}n + 5$



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

The price of EVERYTHING

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert takes issue with the creeping commodification of school curricula, and the impact this has had on ethics across the profession...

In Britain, August is the month of school GCSE and A Level exam results, with parents and pupils across the land ruminating on their results, and their implications for what comes next. Politicians meanwhile ponder what this year's statistical changes might mean for Britain's economic prospects, social mobility or overall academic standards.

Yet throughout this annual media event, the biggest change to affect Britain's education system for almost a century remains unremarked upon, outside the offices of officialdom – namely, the commodification of school education, the curriculum and even knowledge itself.

The education services industry

In 2007, the sociologist Stephen Ball wrote about the increasing involvement of the private sector in state education in a book entitled *Education plc*. The book examined the growth of what was then starting to be known as the 'Education Services Industry' in all aspects of schooling – from the rolling out of IWBs, to the provision of third party CPD courses and proliferation of educational consultancies.

His point was that these developments – first enabled through the 1988 Education Reform Act, but sustained by policies of subsequent governments – represented a reconfiguring of the post-war social democratic welfare state into a new form of *competitive* state.

The economist Alison Wolf has meanwhile astutely observed that education has historically been a benefit provided in societies where growth is thriving, fiscal measures are in place and state planning has been enacted, among a number of other factors. Yet the current orthodoxy is that Britain's economic health depends upon the exam results of its 18- and 16-year-olds – an assertion that turns Wolf's insight on its head.

A public good

In 2022, the combined secondary education industry generated revenues of £55.7 billion. We could justifiably ask at this point whether the notion of education being a 'public sector service' even exists any more. We've seen a major change in the ultimate purpose – the telos, if you like – of education. And if our public understanding of what education is for has changed, then it follows that we've also witnessed a shift in the systems that underpin our social values.

Education, when conceived of as a commodity, is very different to education that's considered a cultural and intellectual public good in its own right. Market imperatives require commodities to be produced and sold, with a view to generating profits. In practice, this amounts to the selling of whiteboards, IT services, textbooks, digital classroom materials and numerous other products and services – but education itself?

In theory, at least, the practice of teaching and learning is still an immaterial public and cultural good, whereby young individuals are encouraged and helped to think about symbolic knowledge (as opposed to social or perception-based knowledge). The ability to bracket one's immediate responses in order to think about abstract concepts is a vital form of intellectual freedom.

In higher education, the latter skill is vital for testing the truth value of any knowledge claim. In this sense, education is not unlike love in that it's fundamentally un-commodifiable.

> ***"Schools are now in the process of outsourcing their very values and ethics to commercial providers"***

The commodification of knowledge

Stephen Ball has expressed particular concern with the latter-day proliferation of third-party businesses in education and schools. Take lesson plan templates, for example, or teaching scripts. For some schools and teachers these can provide a useful shortcut, serving as a safety blanket or quick fix to that harried supply teacher or untested ECT, for whom producing an original lesson plan is a fear-inducing exercise born of necessity, rather than the highly creative act it ought to be.

Of course, template lesson plans will always be limited in their utility, since no teacher or class could ever be described as 'templated'. A pupil once asked me, '*Miss, where do you get your lessons from?*' To which I responded, '*I make them up myself from everything I've read, what I want to teach this lesson, and what I know about you and the class. Why do you ask?*'

The pupil's reply? '*Oh, it's just my other teacher always used [name of online resource provider], and her lessons were really boring.*'

The problem is that today, it's become too easy to treat large, commercially successful repositories of downloadable resources as the sum of all curriculum knowledge. Commodified 'lesson plans' often turn out to be a series of exercises designed to practice a specific rule, or test a very narrow band of information. While there's nothing wrong with that *per se*, they can cause the technical to be over-emphasised, to the point of obscuring the substantive intellectual and imaginative content at hand.

Take letter-writing activities, for example. The justifications given for such exercises now frequently cite the importance of writing letters for 'practising fine-motor skills' and later on, 'job applications'. So much for creativity and the teaching of expertise.

This banal, technical approach emanates from the misguided notion – rife in teacher education and among policymakers – that education is essentially technical and transactional in nature.

The commodification of ethics

As if a commodified knowledge curriculum weren't bad enough, a recent report from Don't Divide Us, of which I am the lead author (see bit.ly/ts127-TP1), shows that a second wave of the educational services industry is now emerging – only this time, it's schools' ethos that's in the commodification cross hairs.

Perhaps intuitively responding to the fact that many teachers are unlikely to find the role of 'curriculum deliverer' or 'facilitator' all that attractive, a slew of third-party organisations have started selling Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies and initiatives as the new, must-have statements of ethos.

For these companies, selling schools the means by which they can promote that they're 'socially just' or 'actively anti-racist' confers both financial gains and/or gains in cultural status. After all, Critical Social Justice is the current lens through which it's now de rigueur for our cultural and intellectual elites to view the world…

Even worse is the implication that schools are now in the process of outsourcing their very values and ethics to commercial providers. This means that a school's traditional ethical values and practices – the most important of which surely involve recognising the importance of formal knowledge, and cultivating a common identity among pupils who are supported by authoritative teachers – are instead not recognised. Or deemed unimportant, or even racist.

Intellectual freedom

The current commercial landscape also includes a number of large, profitable companies that many schools turn to for guidance relating to new Ofsted rulings, document and letter templates and numerous other administrative and logistical services. Yet these same companies will instantly abandon their otherwise technical and ideology-free presentation when assisting schools in matters pertaining to EDI or anti-racist provision.

This is emblematic of how the prior generation of companies that successfully sold schools technocratic commodities helped pave the way for more ideologically partisan, third-party EDI organisations to gain a foothold in the 'education market'.

This is something we need to question. Do we – as citizens, as professionals – wish to affirm and enact the values of securing intellectual freedom and pursuing truth? Do we value education's potential contribution in helping to form young people's identity and enhancing their independent agency?

Are we brave enough to say that 'education' and 'qualifications' aren't the same thing – or indeed that being educated doesn't mean having to hold the favoured sociopolitical views of the day?

IN BRIEF

- **What's the issue?** Private sector providers are playing an increasingly important role in shaping the resources schools use to teach with, and in some cases, even schools' fundamental policies and values.
- **What's being said?** Critics of the trend have noted that this amounts to a major reconfiguring of schools' place within wider society – from state-maintained centres of intellectual enquiry, to sites where ideologically tinged materials are deployed for profit-generating purposes.
- **What's really happening?** Narrowly prescriptive, commercially produced lesson plans and materials are increasingly displacing those devised by teachers, while a lightly regulated industry of 'learning providers' disseminate politically charged, partial messaging in their products and services.
- **The takeaway** A trend that initially saw the private sector stepping in to provide technical and practical solutions that the state couldn't (or wouldn't) has evolved over time to the point where schools' very purpose and vision are being shaped by what private providers are offering.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Alka Sehgal Cuthbert (@ASCphiled) is a teacher, independent academic and writer, and co-editor of *What Should Schools Teach? – Disciplines, subjects and the pursuit of truth*, 2nd Ed. (£25, UCL Press)

REASONS TO TRY...

5 a transition to secondary residential

The secondary transition is often a daunting time, but a dedicated residential can help ease the pressure...

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Have you ever considered organising a transition to secondary residential? Situated adjacent to the Menai Strait, within 169 acres of National Trust parkland, Conway Centres, Anglesey is the perfect venue for whole year secondary residential trips.

1 MEETING NEW FRIENDS

At the start of secondary school, many children will feel nervous about meeting new friends. Taking children away from their school setting and into a social environment will encourage them to feel more confident around their peers, while providing them with opportunities to make new friends and create friendships that will last a lifetime.

2 RESILIENCE AND CONFIDENCE

The transition courses are purposefully run between September and March, when the weather may be more challenging, to encourage children to learn and thrive in a new, potentially tough environment. The activities on offer are designed with the aim that students will continuously improve and develop on a deeper level. The centres will support you and your students in discovering a new sense of confidence and building resilience, while supporting their physical and mental wellbeing, so that they can look forward to their time at secondary school.

3 TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

All activities have been hand-picked to encourage students to work together as a team, with the same shared goals in mind. By focusing minds with unique teamwork activities in this way, students can be supported in making a positive contribution whilst developing their willingness to show initiative and sense of responsibility. Through working together, friendships will form and continue to grow over time.

4 GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

The course begins with a 'goal setting' session, where centre staff will look to understand, encourage and support your goals. At the end of the course, centre staff will then work with you to review and reflect on how students have achieved their goals during the trip. This is a great chance to understand what your students may be struggling with, and how you can support them back at school.

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conwaycentres.co.uk

ConwayCentres

5 INCREASED FOCUS IN CLASS

Research has found that residential trips help young people appreciate that what they learn at school is important to them. Students will return to school with an increased appetite for learning and looking forward to the years ahead. Should you require any curriculum or learning outcomes specific to your school, the centre can adapt the course to meet your requirements.

Key Points

Whether you're looking for accommodation for 250 children or smaller private accommodation for a class of 30, Conway Centres has something for every school!

With its private dock on the Menai Strait, vast woodlands, spacious art spaces and fully accessible facilities, Conway Centres has activities and accommodation to suit every child – whatever their needs

We employ high calibre, qualified staff who possess experience and a thorough understanding of education, and are committed to improving outcomes for children

Education is at the heart of everything Conway Centres does; all residentials are organised with clear learning outcomes in mind, and can be tailored to suit your school's specific goals

Attend to your SEND

The EEF's SEND Specialist **Gary Aubin** explores how teachers can support pupils with SEND in their daily practice

Meeting the range of needs presented by a class of children is undoubtedly a challenging task. However, research suggests that there are approaches teachers can employ to support learning and improve outcomes for all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs.

The evidence which informed the EEF's 'Special Education Needs in Mainstream Schools' guidance report (see bit.ly/ts127-eef1) indicated that there are five particular approaches which can be integrated into day-to-day teaching practice to raise attainment among children with additional needs, as well as their classmates.

Best of all, this 'Five-a-day' model already forms part of most teachers' practice (or can be relatively easily added), meaning that small tweaks could make a significant positive difference for the pupils we teach.

The five approaches in question – as illustrated in the graphic below – are especially well-evidenced as having a positive impact. Harnessing these evidence-informed strategies will positively support all learners, including those with SEND. Teachers should develop a repertoire of these strategies, which they can then use daily and flexibly in response to individual needs, as a starting point for their classroom teaching.

For SENCos or other school leaders, it may be worth sharing the EEF's 'Five-a-day poster' with staff (see bit.ly/ts127-eef2) to promote understanding of these strategies and what they entail.

Reduce the complexity

Picture what this can mean for an ECT at the start of term. Having checked their register, they've seen that there are students in their class with specific learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, and moderate learning difficulties.

Our ECT, already busy grappling with an array of challenges, will need to explore how best to support these pupils with their range of different SEND. After this, they then must apply those strategies to the relevant subject, phase, and curriculum, without diluting the quality of education provided to students without SEND.

What's more, these complex habits will need to be sustained. It can all feel a little overwhelming to manage, which is why this evidence presents a welcome shift of perspective.

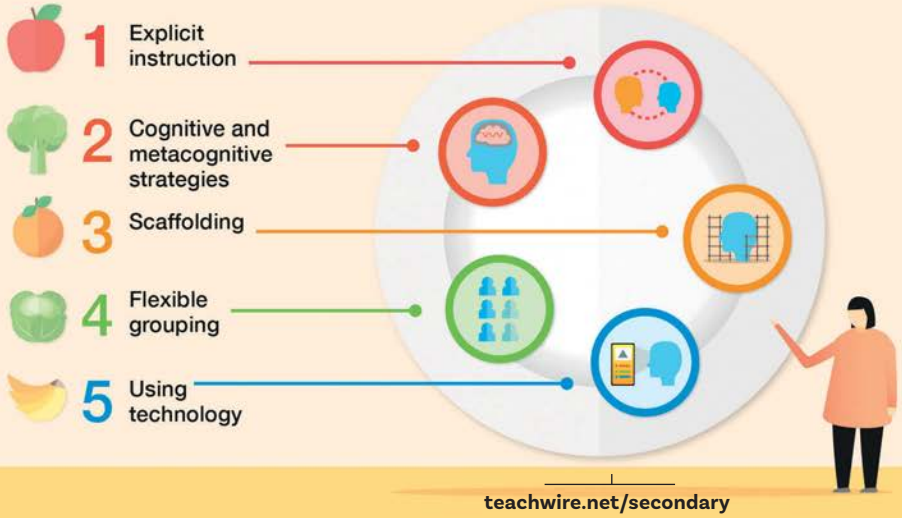
By using explicit instruction, for example, they'll be able to check student understanding more frequently and model tasks before students begin to work independently. These steps will provide support for students who might otherwise struggle to grasp new concepts, or understand how to begin a task. This no add-on or a shiny new tool, but rather a form of high quality teaching that's likely to benefit pupils with SEND.

Effective for everyone

There are some who will (rightly) point out that existing research alone isn't enough to fully meet the challenges involved. They may well contend that the term 'SEND' covers a huge breadth of needs, and that it's vital to really get to know individual children, work alongside families and build trusted relationships.

This evidence review doesn't contest any of those points. It merely points out that studies exist in which the participants are all learners with SEND, and that many of the practices found to work well for learners with SEND will be similarly effective for students without any additional needs.

Any evidence that helps to develop teacher practice for pupils with SEND should be taken seriously, and any evidence that may improve outcomes for pupils with SEND should be considered carefully. Turning to an accessible 'Five-a-day' model when seeking to deliver high quality teaching for pupils with SEND is likely to prove valuable for all teachers, from ECTs to their more experienced colleagues.



THE THEORY IN PRACTICE

"The concept of the five-a-day is accessible for staff and easily implemented, because it is about refining existing teaching practice to ensure high quality learning experiences for all of our students."

– Sarah Keeling, Head of Personalised Learning (SENDCO) at Mary Webb School and Science College

"Sharing the five-a-day approach with colleagues has meant our teachers feel confident in supporting learners with SEND. Visiting classrooms, it appears pupils are benefiting from the central strategies and feeling supported, yet challenged."

– Jess Wood, SENCo at Laureate Academy

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gary Aubin is the EEF's Content Specialist for special educational needs and disabilities

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Labour's education policy has so far lacked the boldness and dynamism that presaged the party's 1997 landslide – but with the Conservatives on the defensive, it should seize the chance to be more ambitious...

Melissa Benn

Those with long memories will recall how 'Education, Education, Education' was one of the key themes during the 1997 election, when New Labour swept to power after 18 years of Conservative rule.

Back then, many voters felt the school estate had been allowed to crumble under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and latterly John Major, and that more investment was needed in state education.

Now, in autumn 2023, most political pundits confidently predict that Labour is set to win the next general election – this time after 13 years of Conservative government, and perhaps again with education as a defining theme. But it would be a mistake to draw too close a parallel with 1997.

The Gove legacy

Many Conservatives believe that the party's education reforms, initiated and driven through with extraordinary energy by Michael Gove between 2010 and 2014, have yielded significant improvements. They point to mass academisation, the introduction and subsequent spread of Free Schools, and the country's increased standing in international league tables.

In the latest round of PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results released in 2019, the UK had indeed moved up the rankings from 22nd to 14th in reading; 27th to 18th in maths and 15th to 14th in science (see bit.ly/ts127-MB1).

Broad backing for the Conservatives' reforms has come from a number of influential sources, including the Times Education Commission. This September, *The Economist* magazine even reported on what it described as 'The strange success of the Tories' schools policy' (see econ.st/3LtQzXk).

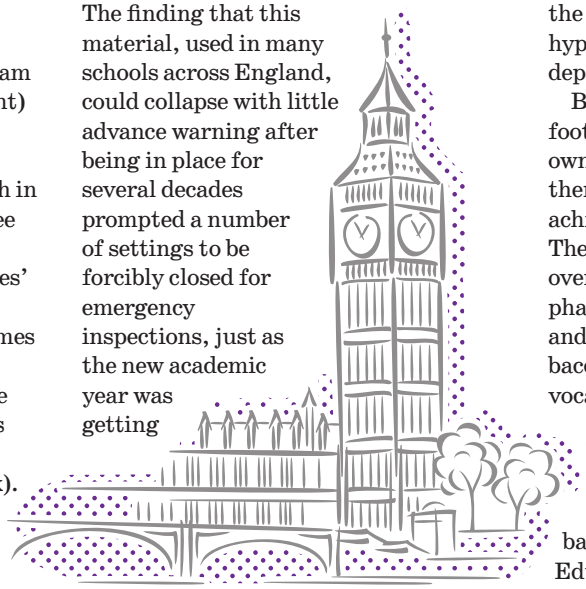
Strikingly, however, there are also many others who believe that the country's school system has reached a new low, with funding slashed, teachers in a state of unrest, arts provision in decline and a growing attainment gap between children of different social classes. Former *Teach Secondary* columnist Fiona Millar, for example, has described the Gove reforms and their legacy as "An endless, exhausting, often toxic whirlwind of ideas."

Cautious promises

And yet, the Labour Party hasn't committed to undoing any of the Conservatives' key reforms. Instead, it's cautiously promised to boost classroom use of spoken language (or 'oracy'), reform Ofsted and invest more in early years and vocational education.

It has also notably pledged to end the tax breaks enjoyed by private schools, using the money saved to fund more teachers in hard-pressed state schools, in a policy that polls well with the electorate. Otherwise, Labour's position on education has thus far not generated quite the game-changing energy of 1997.

But then along came Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). The finding that this material, used in many schools across England, could collapse with little advance warning after being in place for several decades prompted a number of settings to be forcibly closed for emergency inspections, just as the new academic year was getting underway, causing thousands of pupils to be shunted into temporary buildings.



Hard limits

The RAAC issue has certainly turned up the political heat on the current government. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has since been accused on cutting back on school rebuilding when he was Chancellor. Education Minister Gillian Keegan didn't help matters when she was caught on a hot mic complaining that her efforts at resolving the issue were going unappreciated.

The RAAC crisis now serves as a handy metaphor for the ways in which education has fared under Conservative rule, highlighting an arrogant governing party out of touch with ordinary people (see bit.ly/ts127-MB3). We can expect the opposition parties, including Labour, to continue beating the '*Look at our crumbling schools*' drum in the months to come, while the Conservatives work to repair not just the affected schools but their own reputations.

Meanwhile, amid talk of 'rising standards' and 'expansions of educational opportunity' we'll likely see the opening of more Free Schools and hyper-selective sixth forms in areas of deprivation (see bit.ly/ts127-MB2).

But with the government on the back foot, Labour would do well to step up its own education promises. As with health, there's a hard limit to what can be achieved without increased investment. There are also growing calls for a long overdue reform of the mid-secondary phase, including the abolition of GCSEs and the introduction of a genuine baccalaureate that mixes academic and vocational learning.

A renewed boldness on policy, backed by proper funding, could well give the current Labour party the edge it needs in the coming electoral battle over Education, Education, Education...

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 ... SMARTPHONE USE IN SCHOOLS

The debate over the place of smartphones in schools is hardly a new one – but it seems as though attitudes may be starting to harden...

1 What policies are in place?

In July this year, a UN report (see bit.ly/ts126-NL1) expressed concerns over how smartphones were being used in schools, going so far as to recommend they be banned from school sites to reduce disruption. It's not a new debate in England though, with many schools already having some kind of ban in operation.

Back in 2018, fewer than half of secondary teachers stated that phones weren't to be used in school under any circumstances. Today, that figure stands at 60%. The extent to which these rules are consistently enforced, however, is a different matter.

More than a third of secondary teachers say that smartphone rules aren't consistently enforced by all staff in their school. Headteachers are notably the most likely to think that rules *are* being consistently enforced, demonstrating a clear contrast between the views of leadership and classroom practitioners.

2 Do bans actually work?

Where schools afford students relative freedom regarding their smartphone use (allowing them to be used at breaktimes, or even in lessons when directed) 47% of teachers say that students also take them out without permission. At the other extreme, where phones aren't used at all, 27% have observed students using them without permission.

This may be a case of correlation rather than causation – but still, it paints an interesting picture. We shouldn't overlook that 27% of teachers is still a huge number who are reporting that smartphones are being taken out in lessons.

In general, the smartphone issue in schools does appear to be getting worse. So far this year, 38% of of secondary teachers have seen students taking their phones out in lessons without permission, which is up two percentage points compared to last year alone.

3 How are less experienced teachers responding?

It's widely accepted that if you're new to the profession, learning how to manage student behaviour is one of the more difficult challenges you can expect to face during those first few years.

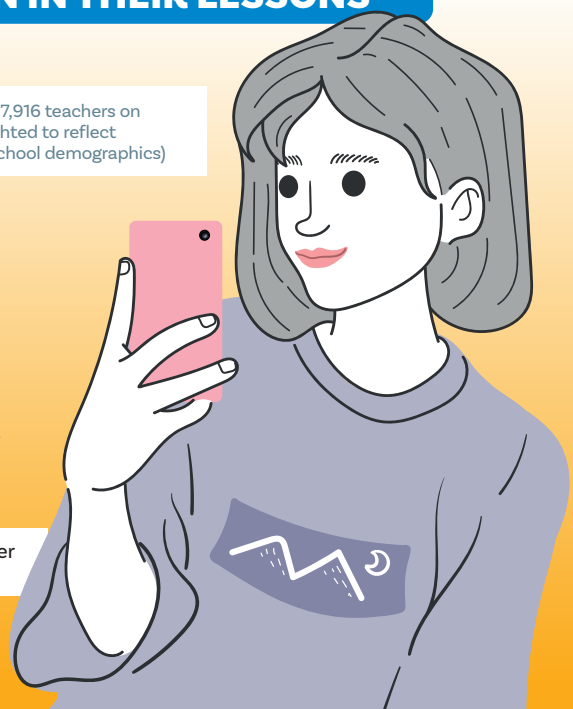
The need to carefully manage students' smartphone usage is especially pertinent here, with almost half of those secondary teachers with less than five years' experience saying that on any given day, a student will take their smartphone out without permission.

More experienced teachers can find themselves contending with this too, but to a significantly lesser extent, with just 29% expressing similar sentiments. As is the case with other behaviour-related disturbances, the profession's less experienced teachers have frequently expressed wanting more support to help them with these kinds of disturbances.

Returning to our main question, then, is there evidence that smartphone bans work? Yes, a bit – but bans alone won't solve the problem.

PROPORTION OF TEACHERS STATING THAT STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN OUT SMARTPHONES WITHOUT PERMISSION IN THEIR LESSONS

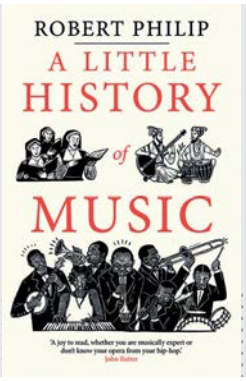
Question answered by 7,916 teachers on 04/05/23 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



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.

Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore

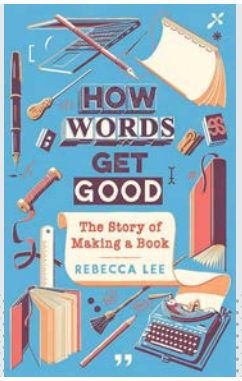


A Little History of Music

(Robert Philip, YUP, £13.99)

The problem with most, if not all subjects is that topics tend to be divorced from their history and influences. One stipulation of the Music Programme of Study is that students *'develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history'*. Covering a huge array of types of music and associated aspects across cultures and time periods, this book provides both depth and breadth. For instance, the historical development of the keyboard, musical notation and different types of music may be found here. Crucially, however, there is discussion of the cultural influences at work to explain how such changes came about. A broad sweep like this will inevitably overlook some aspects, and the lightness of tone might not appeal to academics – but as a reference source and exposition of the connections between genres, it could hardly be bettered.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman (see bit.ly/Eclecticism for more details)

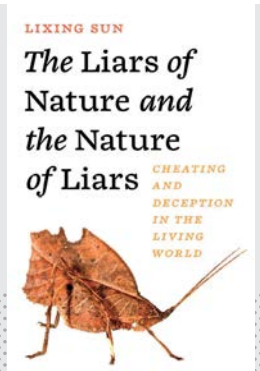


How Words Get Good: The Story of Making a Book

(Rebecca Lee, Profile, £10.99)

Students whose attempts at fiction contain gaping plot holes or grammatical errors can take solace from the fact that such issues bedevil even the most famous authors – though they, unlike your Y9s, have copy editors to check such things. This title charts what we might call the journey of a book, from the earliest shape of a story, through to cover design and blurb writing, and it's fascinating to read – not least because of numerous interesting details drawn from publishing history. Did you know, for example, that words ending in *'ize'* aren't necessarily evidence of creeping Americanisation, if only because such words have been around since the 15th century? Lee clearly loves her subject, and here furnishes English teachers with a treasure trove of literary examples and anecdotes with which to enthuse their charges.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



The Liars of Nature and the nature of liars: Cheating and deception in the living world

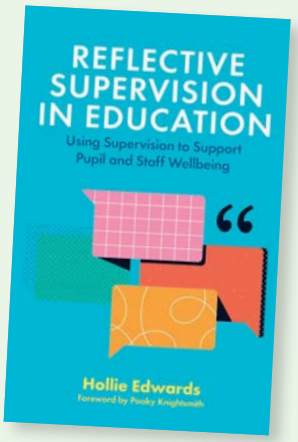
(Lixing Sun, Princeton, £20.61)

This book examines a range of cases in nature where organisms have used subterfuge to obtain what they need. It would be a good source of up-to-date information for biology students from KS3 to A Level, and even touches on some human examples, such as fake news. The key question at the heart of this book is perhaps this – *if honesty is the best policy, why is dishonesty so rife in nature?* It must have a survival value. The author has managed the seemingly impossible by making quite complex theories and rules both enjoyable to read about and relatively easy to understand. Having said that, it's possibly more a book for teachers to draw from than for students, given how it deals with what amounts to a narrow thread of the curriculum at such length.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

How much supervision goes on at your school? In Hollie Edwards' estimation, probably far less than you might think.



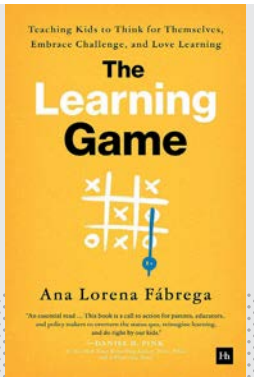
Reflective Supervision in Education

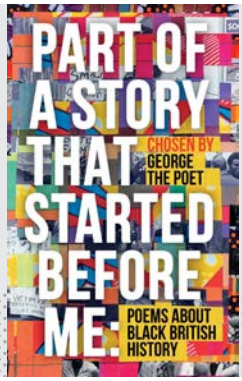
(Hollie Edwards, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £19.99)

The term 'supervision' is one of those words that's employed so frequently within education contexts that we barely give its meaning a second thought. Edwards sets out to remedy this, framing the term as,'*The ability to see things more clearly*' – which, when applied to supporting school staff, amounts to an approach that, '*Offers a professional, reflective space that ensures good, ethical practice in an educational and supportive relationship.*'

Edwards goes on to concisely explain why such reflective supervision is needed within schools, who is likely to benefit most from it and the good it can do, over a series of chapters that double up as a well-structured summary of the many and varied issues school staff are currently contending with – from excessive workloads and high-stakes safeguarding demands, to the mental health struggles of school leaders.

Case presented, Edwards then lays out the specifics of how a school might go about structuring its self-reflective supervision provision, presenting different options for schools to explore depending on their circumstances. If you're in need of an effective, sustainable form of professional support for your school colleagues – and these days, who isn't? – you'll find plenty to chew on here.





The Learning Game

(Ana Lorena Fábrega, Harriman House, £14.99)

Fábrega writes as a former teacher and someone who grew up attending ten schools across seven countries, giving this critique of traditional school structures and teaching methods a distinctly global perspective. In her telling, the routines and rituals of most schools resemble the rules of a game that can be won through obedience, and thus amount to an *imitation* of learning – in stark contrast to the self-directed pursuit of personal interests outside of school that constitute *actual* learning. After an historical overview charting the policies and changes that produced the systems Fábrega takes issue with, she endeavours to show how enthusiasm and play can produce the most effective learning of all, while providing some practical advice for parents. Her arguments are unlikely to persuade hardened 'trads', but we'd venture many readers will find much to admire in her ideas and the urgency with which she presents them.

Part of a Story That Started Before me

(Ed. George the Poet, Penguin, £16.99)

Curated by the acclaimed spoken word performer and celebrated podcaster George the Poet, this poetry anthology seeks to explore the full sweep of Black British history, from the Roman era to the present day, over the course of some 69 poems. Organised into eight sections, each themed around a distinct historical epoch, the poems touch on individuals and events both well known (Martin Luther King, The Toxteth Riots) and oft overlooked (the Georgian-era publishing pioneer Phillis Wheatley, Beethoven's 'mulatto composer' creative partner George Polgreen Bridgetower). Teachers and students will appreciate the section intros by historian Dr Christienna Fryar that offer useful context, plus the accompanying notes by some of the poets themselves. Yet the real draw is the sheer emotional range and intensity of the selected works – by turns angry, sardonic, melancholic, hopeful and valedictory – expressed through a dazzling array of poetic forms.

Meet the editor

GEORGE THE POET

How did you go about choosing which poems were included?

Some were written prior to this project, which I'd come across before – but because we were aiming to break down British history into these specific time periods, some were written to brief, which was a new experience.

Were some periods easier to 'cover' with poems than others?

The more modern periods were easier to write about, if only because the interplay between Britain and Blackness of recent times is readily available; we can look into that history. But what this book does is unpack unheard stories and unexplored aspects of British history, so there was a dual task to perform where those more 'obscure' chapters of the historical record were concerned.

What sort of thought and discussion would you like to see the book prompt among readers?

Colonial history is at the core of the modern experience. That interplay between Britishness and Blackness predates the colonial period, but I do think the teaching of colonial history and its legacy is supremely important in order for our young people to understand the world that they're inheriting.

I hope the book is able to advocate for that, but also that it doesn't get sidelined into its own cultural silo. I hope the book is seen as a multifaceted, multidimensional project of reflection – because this is historiography, as well as literature.

What recent trends or developments give you cause for optimism?

I have faith in people. In terms of popular sentiment and public spaces, there does seem to be a lot more interest in revisiting what the fundamentals of colonialism were. I can't remember any other point in my lifetime when there was so much commitment to reassessing the project of Empire.

At the same time, it's important to recognise that there has been serious pushback from conservative elements within not just Britain, but Western culture and institutions more generally. I feel there's been a surge towards the right in the ways culture and history are often talked about. The past few governments have referred to this as 'culture wars', but I believe that's spurious. It's an old tactic used to break up solidarity and understanding between working people. 'The People' are pushing a for a broader conversation, but you know – *the Empire strikes back...*

For more information, visit georgethepoet.com

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Mini whiteboards

Even in tech-saturated 2023, the humble whiteboard can still offer plenty of teaching and learning utility in the classroom to teachers who use them well, says **Jennifer Wozniak-Rush**...

Mini whiteboards are a testament to the idea that effective teaching resources needn't always be high tech. With these seemingly simple tools we can create more interactive, engaging, and dynamic learning environments, build better student engagement, provide instant feedback and ensure mistakes are seen as an important part of the learning journey. Here's how...

1 Check understanding, instantly

Don't underestimate the power of mini whiteboards to provide instantaneous feedback. Teachers can pose a question and ask students to write their answers on their mini whiteboards, allowing for a rapid assessment of who's grasped the idea and who may need further clarification.

Mini whiteboards can and should also be used for regular formative assessments. By assessing students' understanding during the lesson, teachers can tailor their instruction on the fly to meet the students' needs and immediately rectify any misconceptions.

2 Involve everyone

Having every student respond using a mini whiteboard will ensure they're all actively involved in the lesson, thus neutralising opportunities for non-participation.

3 Foster a no-fear environment

On mini whiteboards, mistakes are easily erased. This can encourage students who are unsure to still try, without the fear of permanent errors, and help emphasise the process of thinking and trying.

4 Facilitate brainstorming

When beginning a new topic, whiteboards give students a ready way of jotting down what they already know or any questions they might have.

5 Assist retrieval

Whether your retrieval questions refer to last lesson, last week or last topic, test your students via their mini whiteboards.

6 Encourage elaborative responses

Instead of simple yes/no or multiple-choice answers, teachers can ask students to use their whiteboards to elaborate on their responses, promoting deeper thinking.

7 Check spelling and grammar

In language classes, students can use their whiteboards to write sentences, correct given sentences or spell words, habituating instant correction and learning.

8 Enable peer review

Have students pair up and exchange their whiteboards, so that they can compare answers, discuss discrepancies, learn from each other, and review each other's responses – all effective ways of fostering peer learning.

9 Sow anticipation

Before revealing an answer or continuing a story, teachers can ask students to note down their predictions of what will happen next, thus keeping them actively engaged while developing their critical thinking.

10 Practice problems

For subjects that frequently draw on diagrams, like biology or geography, mini whiteboards can be an excellent practice aid and means by which to work out problems, providing a visual indication that will help teachers spot common mistakes and address them immediately.

11 Monitor progress

For more involved problems and in-depth responses, have students show their progress on their whiteboards – though be wary of asking students to write lengthy paragraphs, since it will be hard to check them all. Task students with writing bullet points, which you can then use to guide students in the right direction if you see them veering off course.

GENERAL TIPS

- Establish some ground rules for how your whiteboards should be used so that they're tools of learning, and not a form of distraction. I always remind students that they'll need to show me their answers after my countdown to prevent copying. This also lets me to scan the room and instantly see if I must allow more time for everyone to produce an answer.
- I'll often remind students that their responses should be legible, so that both I and their peers can understand what they've written.
- My students know that their mini whiteboards aren't for recording 'correct' answers, but to encourage thinking and participation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jennifer Wozniak-Rush (@MissWozniak) is an assistant headteacher for teaching and learning, and an SLE in MFL

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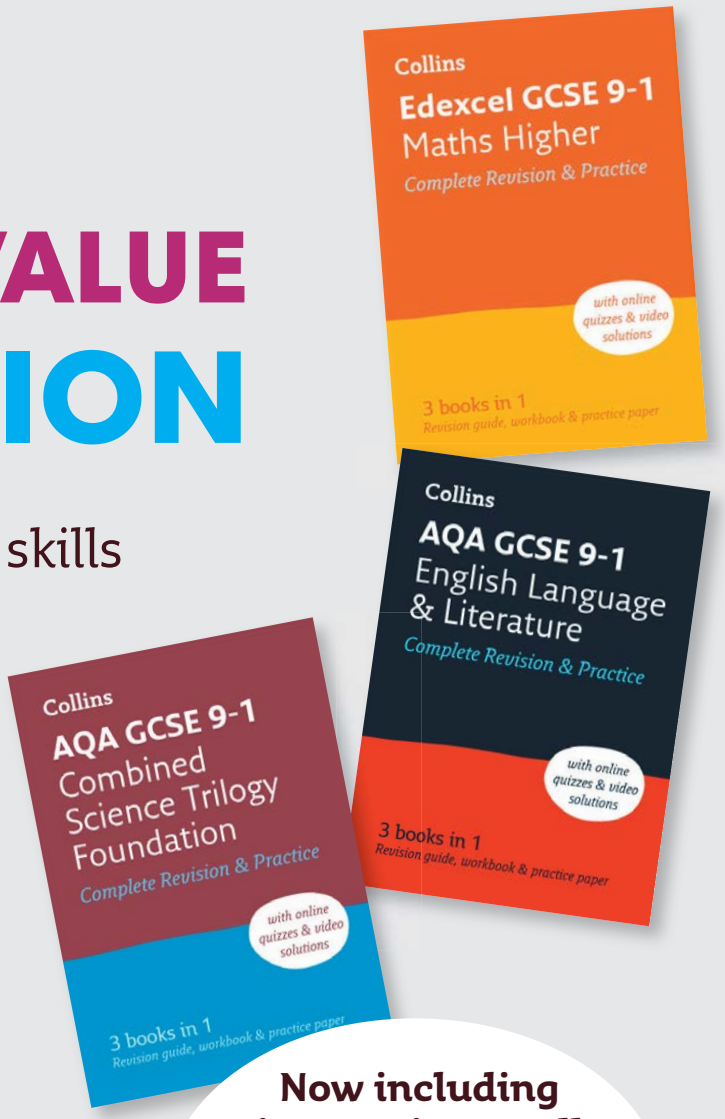

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IN THIS SECTION

IN FIGURES:

WHICH ACADEMIC SUBJECTS DO STUDENTS THINK THEY'RE BEST AT?

29%
of male students – the largest proportion – believe their best subject to be maths

27%
of female students – the largest proportion – believe their best subject to be English

68%
of girls achieved grades A* to C in maths – compared to 65% of boys

Source: 'Attitudes towards STEM subjects by gender at KS4' 2019 research brief produced by the DfE

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

ABLE STUDENTS NEED HELP TOO
Left to their own devices, even the most able students can struggle with revision, says Vic Goddard
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REVISION IS SKILLED WORK – NOT JUST A PROCESS
Tracey Leese proposes re-examining the role revision plays within the broader learning process
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PAST PAPERS AND BEYOND
Claire Gadsby suggests some ideas for developing a more varied revision 'diet' for your students
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EARLY STARTERS

If you want to ingrain good GCSE revision habits among your students, the real work should begin at KS3, advises **Charlotte Lander**...

Every teacher will be wearily familiar with the way some students in successiveb cohorts demonstrate the same bad GCSE revision habits and practices, year on year. Could the key to tackling problematic revision habits lie in better preparation and instruction at KS3? Though if so, given the absence of any formal assessments between Y7 and Y9, how might this be built in, given teachers' existing curriculum tasks?

Consider the synonyms for 'revision' you'll find in a typical dictionary – '*cramming*,' '*rereading*'... and cue the eye-rolling. Many, if not all teachers will at some point have taught students with an emotional attachment to their highlighters, as well as others preferring a more passive approach, signalled by a worrying lack of revision notes, cards – or indeed any preparation at all.

At its core, revision is the act of preparation. *Successful* revision, however, is both disciplined and purposeful. As teachers, we know that revision is ultimately a skill that needs to be taught, modelled, practised and honed, just like any other. So it follows that the sooner we can start explicitly teaching those effective revision habits, the better.

Introducing our expectations

The question we then need to ask is when we should introduce our expectations for revision. If we stop to think about it, what does effective revision in a school setting actually look like? We might call to mind a Y11 student not far out from their GCSE exams, creating mind maps and testing their peers on key information with the aid of flashcards. Or they might be quietly tucked away, busily jotting down knowledge from memory.

Yet both scenarios miss something important – the opportunities there are for students in KS3 to draw links between low-stakes retrieval quizzes, and the long-term retention of key subject knowledge needed for the exam room.

For many years, retrieval practice has been a widely used tool in the classroom for improving learning through recall. Further to this, we continue to model metacognitive awareness; teaching students how to actively reflect upon their own thought processes in response to a task.

Yet whilst these and many other effective classroom tools are explicitly taught, revision is often left to sit patiently waiting in the student's toolbox until it's finally ready to be put into action at KS4, alongside the assumption that students already have a cognitive blueprint for how to use it.

Strategy, mindset and behaviour

Often, one of the biggest challenges at KS4 (and KS5) is how to address the behaviour of students who rely on a brief last-minute scan of their notes, or who believe that cramming the night before is the key to success.

By this point, it's usually too late for students to adopt and commit to a new way of revising. But if we can teach our Y7s that the recipe for successful revision incorporates strategy, mindset and behaviour, then we're helping to build the foundations of long-term retention skills. Possessing both the knowledge of how to revise effectively and the skill needed to put this knowledge into practice will enable students to experience a genuine sense of achievement in their learning.

> ***"A key aspect of effective revision is that it requires the student to take an active role in their learning"***

A good starting point for this could involve organising workshops. Groups of KS4 students could, for example, organise and deliver revision-focused workshops to their KS3 peers across a range of curriculum areas. These sessions might see the older students modelling their own revision habits and sharing their personal experiences – of how to summarise topics, identify keywords in a question, maximise the capacity of their working memory or even how to use their knowledge organiser effectively.

If we can place explicit emphasis on students taking an active and effortful role in their learning, we can establish an important bridge between accountability and outcomes.

Revision redefined

If we could could start presenting revision as a form of 'disciplined preparation' that requires students to actively process,

familiarise, decode and rehearse information, we'll be creating multiple opportunities for students to 'revise' long before KS4 – all without explicitly using the term itself.

Then again, it could be argued that the term 'revision' is actually one that should be more commonplace in KS3 than it is currently. The naive assumption that revision is simply the act 'cramming the night before an exam' or 'rereading and highlighting notes' can discourage students from applying the kind of (considerably more helpful) strategies they already employ daily in the classroom, all because of those limiting connotations often attached to the word 'revision'.

Using the structure of Cornell Notes, students in a Y7 English class could be tasked with completing 10 minutes of independent revision. Let's say they're prompted to recall their knowledge of Stave 2 in *A Christmas Carol*.

They can spend five minutes retrieving their knowledge onto their notes sheets, before spending the next two minutes familiarising themselves with the key events. The final three minutes can then be spent reflecting on any knowledge they've missed and adding this to their sheets. Essentially, the students will have engaged with 10 purposeful minutes of revision. The activity itself might not be especially new or groundbreaking, but it shows how straightforward the process of redefining students' understanding of 'revision' can be.

Recognition and recall

While it's all well and good prompting students to create mind maps or use flashcards at any Key Stage, if we aren't teaching students how to actually engage with the content itself, then the blueprint will remain unfinished. More than this, students should be exposed to the *why*.

Circling back to metacognitive awareness, it's crucial for students to begin drawing links early on between what, how and why. They should be exposed to *why* it's so important to revisit knowledge often, and *why* transferring key information to flashcards will then allow them to use these at a later date as a cue for retrieving further relevant knowledge. It's one thing to create consistent opportunities to engage with effective revision habits, but quite another for students to understand why these are so valuable within the broader learning process.

A key aspect of effective revision is that it requires the student to take an active role in their learning. The goal is ultimately for students to distinguish between information they *recognise* and information they can *recall* – the latter of which will indicate a far greater sense of understanding.

The creation of 'desirable difficulty' is a fundamental element of good revision practice, and one employed in commonplace teaching strategies like spaced practise and interleaving. Yet it can still feel much more comfortable for students to revise information they already understand, thus creating a false sense of reassurance through the avoidance or dismissal of more challenging topics.

These types of misplaced and ineffective revision habits must be exposed and confronted at an early stage. We can model this self-awareness throughout KS3 – equipping students with the ability to hold themselves accountable for how to plan and structure considerably more effective revision habits.

Given that lack of formal examinations at KS3, it may feel too soon to introduce your students to revision-based approaches and strategies. Yet if we want to capitalise on the success of independent study, then we should want our students to feel they've been equipped with the tools and blueprint needed to actively implement much healthier revision habits. Ideally at a far earlier stage than the night before the exam…

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Charlotte Lander is a teacher of English and psychology, and specialist in Talk for Learning

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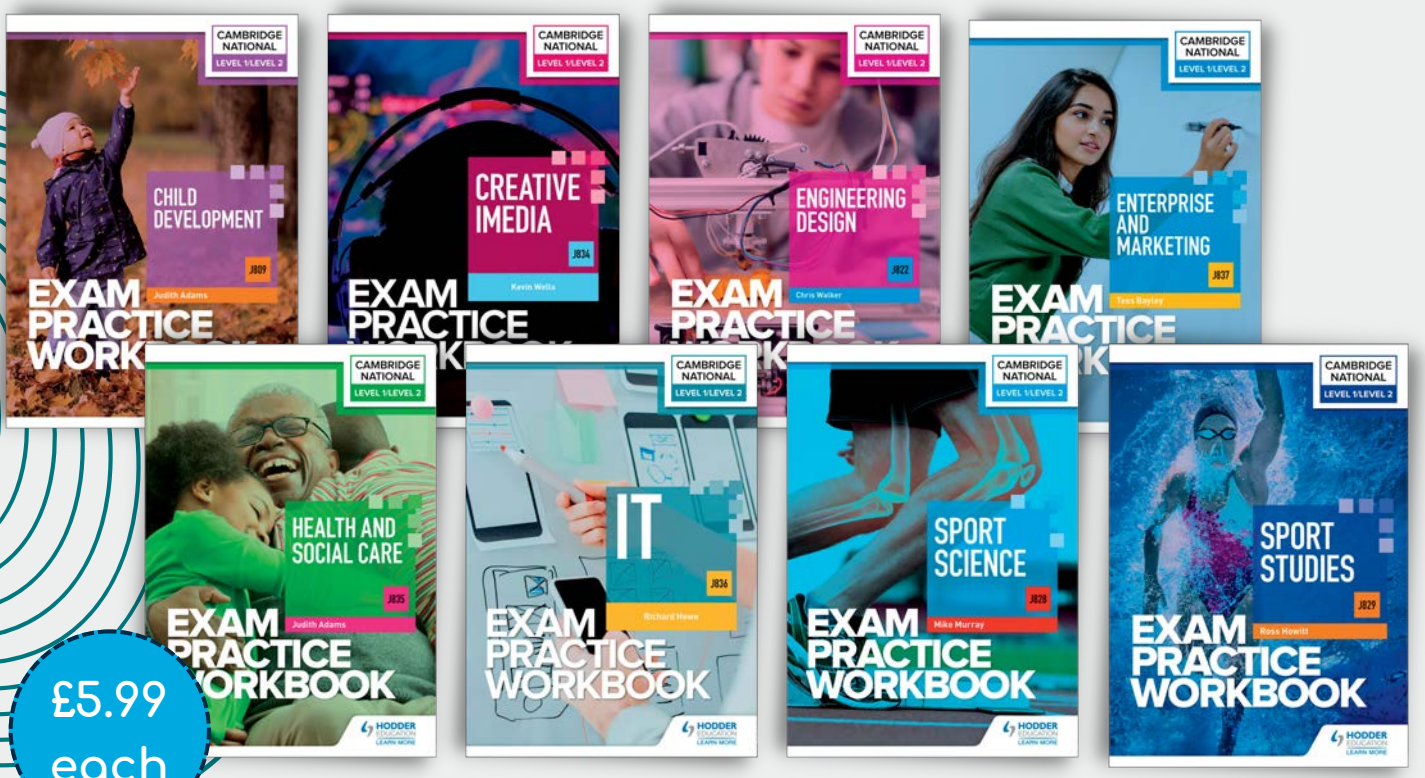

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Help the learning stick

When it comes to ensuring students retain key knowledge, teachers now have more software-assisted tools to call upon than ever, says **Emma Slater**

There are many techniques that teachers can use to deliver engaging and effective lessons, but ensuring that key knowledge sticks can be a consistent challenge.

It's critical to identify important knowledge gaps early on, but this can be far from straightforward – especially in mixed ability classes.

Meaningful feedback

However, with the right tools at their disposal educators can set short and engaging assessments to test pupil knowledge throughout the term, without applying unnecessary pressure.

Users of GCSEPod will be familiar with its 'Check & Challenge' feature. This is a fun and engaging way of tracking progress that uses game-based activities designed to engage and motivate students. These activities then feed into a points-based systems that motivate students to reach their next academic objective, while helping them to retain key learning in the process.

Over time, these results can be used to provide meaningful and actionable feedback for teachers, helping them to more accurately identify where those knowledge gaps are and plan their subsequent lessons accordingly.

The action required might vary considerably, but providing students with a detailed report of their strengths and weaknesses will allow them – and you – to better prepare for their exams and plan their revision in a more focused way.

The intuitive information dashboards used in GCSEPod

and similar solutions let teachers easily visualise the marks achieved by their pupils and quickly compare these against the average marks gained for each question and by the cohort as a whole. This enables trends to be identified over the course of academic year and extra support put in place, if required, at an earlier stage where it's more likely to have a positive impact.

By intervening as soon as possible, you can ensure that pupils won't lose their confidence and disengage with a subject, but rather feel empowered to learn.

Targeting weaker areas

Encouraging good habits is key to ensuring that learners have the confidence to deal with knowledge gaps head on and don't feel deflated.

Personalised learning will often be an unrealistic option for teachers with limited resources, but with the right combination of learning software and systems, pupils can be given individually tailored support to help develop those good habits.

GCSEPod, for example, has a 'boost playlist' function, which will automatically generate a playlist of learning content that's specifically intended to help a student practice only their weakest areas. Assistance like this can give students a greater sense of control over their own learning, while allowing educators to place more emphasis on individual progress.

Teachers also have the option to call upon the aid of more formal assessments when practising exam-style situations, which can be based on examiner-authored questions that are suitably mapped to students' differing abilities and rates of progress.

The aforementioned 'Check & Challenge' assessment system can help in evaluating students' levels of knowledge and understanding, while also providing scaffolded support via hints, multiple choice options and feedback statements.

The option to withhold this support and place more difficult questions in the mix will conversely ensure that even your most able students can be challenged appropriately.

Conquering the gaps

The education journey tends to be an intricate one, with every learner treading their own unique path. Addressing knowledge gaps should be a priority, but it remains an often complex task.

And it's here where technology can play a pivotal role. Students' learning can be effectively 'gamified' in order to boost motivation and generate insightful feedback. Variability in knowledge gaps necessitates a flexible response, but with sufficiently detailed reports, you can empower students to navigate their own strengths and weaknesses.

Timely interventions will help to keep learners engaged and prevent losses of confidence, though the linchpin of this is to encourage good habits, which can be helped by carrying out exam-style assignments and using tools such as the 'boost playlists' function mentioned earlier.

Ultimately, a synergy of technology, adaptable strategies and individualised support can equip students with what they'll need to conquer their knowledge gaps, and attain a greater sense of empowerment over the course of their educational journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Emma Slater is senior product manager at Access Education GCSEPod; for more information, visit theaccessgroup.com/en-gb/education

Knowing IS NOT ENOUGH

Teaching students a knowledge-rich curriculum won't mean much if they're unable to meaningfully apply what they've learnt, advises **Matt MacGuire** – particularly in the run-up to exams...

"*Knowing is not enough; we must apply*" **– Bruce Lee**

Children need to know things. The knowledge-rich curriculum has been a sensible and noble aspiration for many schools over the last few years. Knowledge isn't snobbish or ugly, and it's not the enemy of creativity (since you can't be creative in any field without knowledge of what's already been created by others).

Teachers who call themselves 'progressive' are wrong to envision rows of Victorian children regurgitating barren, arid facts to satisfy Gradgrindian didacts. That's not what a knowledge-rich curriculum looks like when it is enacted properly. When it is enacted *badly*, though, the progressives may have a point...

Closed questions

The teaching of knowledge can be quite straightforward, especially where the knowledge being taught is considered objectively true. The inner angles of a triangle add up to 180°. Chlorophyll is green in pigment. Macbeth is a tragic hero.

Those declarative sentences can be easily translated into closed questions ('*What colour is chlorophyll?*') so that the knowledge can be tested. Many teachers have started using knowledge organisers as a basis for this kind of simple, direct testing. Students memorise the information on the knowledge organisers first, and are then quizzed on that declarative knowledge. This is a good thing. Knowing the most valuable information about a given topic is infinitely better than not knowing the most valuable information about a given topic.

There is, however, a danger in the simplicity of this approach to teaching and testing knowledge. It's easy for teachers to do, producing routines that are easy for students to follow, but it can get very formulaic.

The lack of novelty in, say, regular retrieval practice techniques and 'do now' activities can be disengaging. Routine is important, but it has its limits. Another problem is that teachers can fall into a comfortable habit of delivering knowledge and then testing it, whilst becoming too reliant on a centrally prepared, knowledge-rich curriculum.

Extended application

Consequently, skilful and detailed application tasks can become increasingly alien and intimidating, for both students and teachers. The unidimensional application of knowledge in a typical retrieval practice activity is really a simple memory test. The application of knowledge in a more complex task – such as the writing of an essay, or navigation of a detailed diagram – requires much more mental effort, sustained attention and classroom time.

Extended application also demands from students sustained focus and attention, plus the ability to ignore distractions and the resilience needed to engage in tasks that entail mental struggles. They probably won't get it right first time, and with every repeated effort, what resilience and mental stamina they have will further diminish.

Brute force memorisation of facts doesn't call on the same kind of mental dexterity. In lessons where students' attention is wavering, in which teachers and students are becoming tired, the easy choice may well be to stick with declarative knowledge and retrieval practice.

Bang for our buck

Testing knowledge via only one straightforward method doesn't develop true knowledge, though with enough repetition it can certainly create *inflexible knowledge*. By that, I mean knowledge that learners are only trained to apply wthinin a single context, or in response to a given stimulus. The value of a single item of knowledge is therefore significantly restricted. We can give its utility a numerical value of 1.

Hypothetically, if we can show students how to apply that same single unit of knowledge in three different ways across three different contexts, then its utility could increase to a value of 3.

We get more bang for our buck, more application from our knowledge. This has to be the way forward since *application* of knowledge should be our overall goal.

After all, what else is knowledge for, if not to be applied in creative and intelligent ways to a variety of questions, challenges and problems? Students need to build a body of knowledge, and then place that declarative knowledge in long term memory. Otherwise, any attempts at academic work simply become naïve guesswork.

Letting students down

So, what does students applying their knowledge look like in practice? Well, there's one obvious answer to that question – they need to practise applying their knowledge in a way that emulates the final assessment conditions. They need *exam practice*.

At this point, I can almost hear the progressive-aligned readers among you groaning, '*My school is not an exam factory! We teach students so much more about good character, and empathy, and...*' And that's commendable. Schools should do that.

But they must also fulfil their core purpose, which is to *educate*. Students mustn't be let down in their exam preparation by well-intentioned, yet stubborn ideologues prepared to put character education before academic success.

This is especially true in underprivileged schools. If these students are going to have a fair chance, then they need to be *hyper-prepared* for their exams. I speak from personal experience here. I wish my teachers had emphasised exam practice. Hell, I wish I'd actually seen what an exam paper looked like before the exam!

"I wish my teachers had emphasised exam practice. I wish I'd actually seen what an exam paper looked like before the exam."

Any subjective notions around what constitutes good character, however passionately held, will pale into irrelevance if students don't achieve academically. Character can continue to change over a lifetime of experience. Exam grades are forever.

Snivelling and cowardly?

The first kind of practice to build into the curriculum is therefore that which emulates exam conditions. This will be much the same from subject to subject, though students will, of course, answer in different ways – through equations, calculations or the drawing of graphs; by interpreting data tables; choosing between multiple options or drafting essays, to name but a few. Knowing how to apply knowledge to exam questions is an essential part of your students' curriculum. At a certain point, you *do* have to teach to the test.

There are many teachers out there who would object to this sentiment, and it's worth thinking about why that is. Some teachers will discuss exam preparation as though it were some snivelling and cowardly act of conformity; a form of submission before the oppressive demands of the DfE and assorted exam boards. Needless to say, I think this is a silly way of thinking about examinations.

When you teach students to 'pass exams', the extrinsic target of a strong examination result is causally linked to students' successful learning and application of the knowledge and skills that will be tested in said exam. The exam result will itself be a proxy for that successful learning.

I'd go so far as to say that complaining about '*teaching to the test*', or '*working in an exam factory*' is wrongheaded, and perhaps even lazy. After all, the process of fully explaining, modelling, supporting and then assessing exam-style work is intensive. It demands lots from teachers and students alike, and I can see why both might seek to avoid the heavy work involved, but that's just tantamount to sticking one's head in the sand. Failure to apply is failure to prepare.

Questions upon questions

That said, setting exam practice every lesson would be the surest way to turn students off your subject completely. Questioning and classroom discussion – *when managed properly* – are both excellent ways of allowing students to apply what they have learnt. The best teachers will do this regularly, and insist that their students use the vocabulary of the subject in their responses.

This is an excellent opportunity for public praise and modelling when students get it right, and useful for corrective coaching when students reveal a misconception through their spoken contributions. Public corrections, when delivered sensitively, will also disabuse other students of the same error at the same time.

The beauty of spoken interactions in class is their fluidity. Questions can lead to other questions. Students can become fascinated and intrigued. The teacher can share some interesting item of hinterland knowledge – perhaps some exciting contemporary development in psychology, or economics, or sociology.

Conversation presents a chance to both apply subject knowledge, and really bring your subject to life.

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

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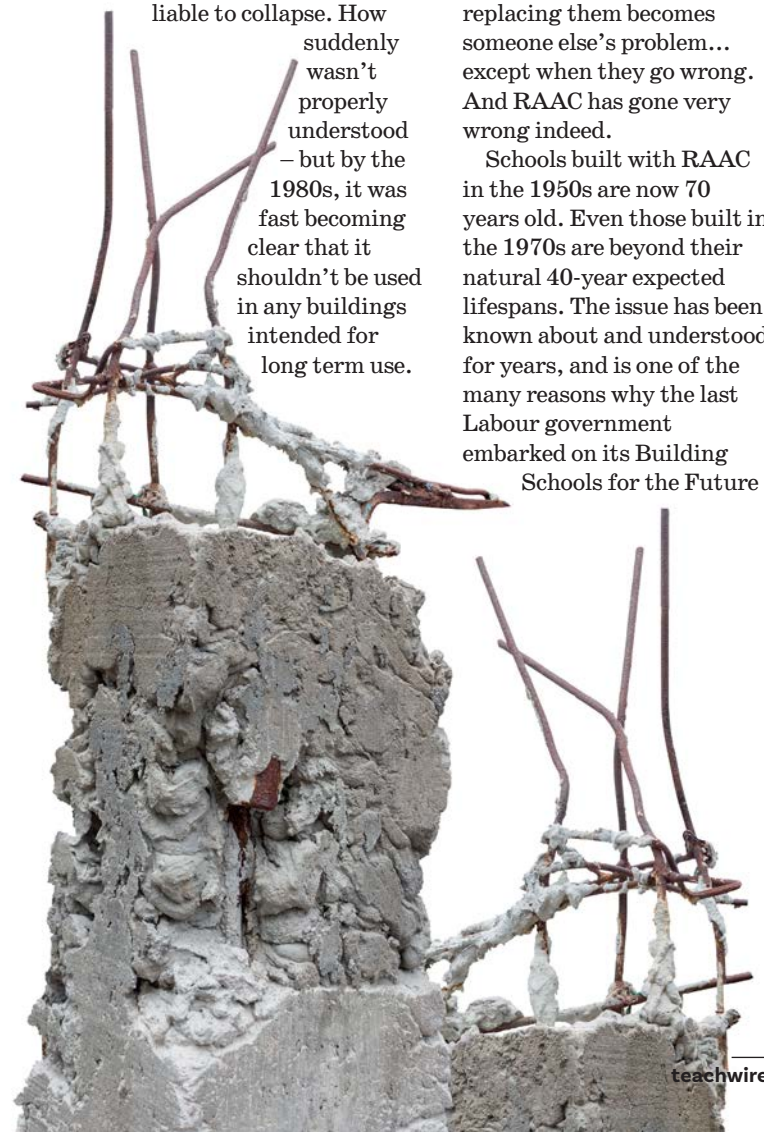
RAAC and Ruin

The ongoing 'crumbling concrete crisis' has conclusively shown where the priorities of successive governments really lay, says **Carl Smith** – and it wasn't with young people or teachers...

When presented with a challenging mix of post-war debt and a baby boom, how do you build lots of inexpensive public buildings, and particularly schools, quickly? Back then, reinforced autoclave aerated concrete was the answer.

It was a wonder material whose time had come, and eager governments took full advantage. It was light, thermally efficient and easy to make. The perfect combination – albeit on the understanding that it had a short shelf life of around 40 years. If it were to remain in place any longer, it would be liable to collapse. How suddenly wasn't properly understood – but by the 1980s, it was fast becoming clear that it shouldn't be used in any buildings intended for long term use.



The problem with public buildings, though, is that once they're built and people start using them, they become very difficult and expensive to replace.

Five-year cycles

In our country's democracy, politicians tend to work in five-year cycles, with anything requiring a longer-term view typically not treated as a priority. Voters are generally reluctant to vote for parties intending to raise taxes, particularly when the promised benefits will only become clear over 20 to 30 years. So the buildings remain in place, and replacing them becomes someone else's problem... except when they go wrong. And RAAC has gone very wrong indeed.

Schools built with RAAC in the 1950s are now 70 years old. Even those built in the 1970s are beyond their natural 40-year expected lifespans. The issue has been known about and understood for years, and is one of the many reasons why the last Labour government embarked on its Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Whatever the merits of that particular initiative, it at least meant that lots of schools were going to be rebuilt.

My own school had been scheduled for rebuilding in 2016. Like many, it was crumbling to the point where a full rebuild was going to be more cost effective than a patch-up. It was also very energy inefficient and expensive to heat.

None of that mattered to Michael Gove, though. The fact that it would have to be rebuilt sooner or later was neither here nor there; later was politically more convenient, so that was that. The BSF programme was cancelled with nothing to replace it.

Different standards

This act of vandalism now threatens the lives of thousands of children, young people and staff. In a sense, the present Education Secretary is simply unlucky to be around at the time when '*Must do soon*' became '*Must do immediately.*' However, the subsequent revelation that the budget for a proposed new school rebuilding programme was halved in 2021 isn't so easily excused.

The school estate has been conveniently left to wrack and ruin for years, responsibility for which lies with anyone in the past who ultimately decided to do nothing about it.

My school is now on the new rebuilding programme, among a group scheduled to 'enter delivery' from April 2025 – fully nine years after it would have been rebuilt under BSF. In that time it has become horrifically expensive to heat and subject to frequent water leaks, while in June a lightning strike ripped the roof off the entire main building. Fortunately, there doesn't seem to be any RAAC, since most of the site was built pre-war, but that's little comfort.

RAAC can kill, as can asbestos. There are many problems with the school estate which, while not immediately life-threatening, would never be tolerated in the premises housing major companies. It would be bad for business. Employees would refuse to work there. Yet when it comes to children and young people, different standards seem to apply. School leaders may protest, but there are other priorities and elections must be won.

Even now, at the time of writing, the apparent answer to the immediate problem is to kick other problems even further down the road. Taking money out of the existing capital budget for schools, rather than putting new money into the system, simply means that all those other desperately needed improvements to school buildings will be delayed yet further.

It seems that when it comes to school building, the lessons are never learned.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Carl Smith (@SmithCarl19530) is the principal of Casterton College, Rutland, has written on a range of educational topics and is a regular contributor to ASCL's *Leader* magazine

From *'Well done'* to *'Wheeeeeee...!'*

Rewards systems should always be approached carefully, cautions **Daniel Harvey** – but there's no denying the thrill of a theme park trip for doing well in class...

For the past few years, it's been my privilege to be the senior leader with responsibility for student behaviour and attitudes and to lead the pastoral team. An important aspect of this work has involved overseeing the rewards budget – but something about the term 'reward' has never sat right with me.

Should we, as teachers and leaders, really talk about 'rewarding' behaviour and reduce achievements to a transaction involving vouchers? Could a school instead focus on 'recognition', to allow for a more discerning, just-in-time process that lets students know their efforts are seen and valued?

Rewards versus recognition

A *reward* is something you're given because you've done something good and/or worked hard. *Recognition* is public appreciation for an individual or group's efforts or actions.

My own approach has been to ensure student success is valued and appreciated in a timely manner, adds to student motivation and builds positive student attitudes to school.

However, there are many students who demonstrate consistently great behaviour and attitudes to learning. What concerns me is that these students sometimes don't receive enough recognition from staff to indicate that we see their efforts and success, and don't take them for granted.

I'd argue that special events – particularly trips – shouldn't be the *main* means by which student achievements and successes are recognised. Rather, they should sit atop a firm foundation of frequent, more straightforward reward events. End of term 'treat trips' can sometimes take place too far out from when a student genuinely excelled. What we need are for all reward events to be both motivational and supportive of future behaviour.

Mixing it up

Building a varied and effective reward repertoire over the school year will allow for more consistent recognition to take place. I know some heads of year who organise regular pizza parties for select groups of students – often involving lots of pizza, music and games during lessons.

A primary school where I'm vice-chair of governors runs an annual Christmas Movie cinema trip for all students, which definitely adds to the magic of the season. Prior agreements with the cinema regarding tickets, food and drink purchases and other issues help to ensure a smooth and enjoyable visit every time. Secondary schools could look at potentially turning their main theatre or hall into a temporary cinema and even order in treats at scale.

In summer months, a visit from an ice cream van could provide a 'short and event' reward event, but this may be better suited to smaller schools, given the logistical issues involved with numbers, size of queues, temperatures and so forth.

Big trips

Drayton Manor is a theme park local to my school – and as any educator the West Midlands will tell you, late July sees the park rammed with school students from around the region having a great time. Admittedly, the wait times for rides sometimes touch 90 minutes, the teacher-filled coffee shop queues are often long, and staff can expect to field requests to supervise students on StormForce 10 – a ride guaranteed to leave everyone a soaking mess.

But in my experience, students do appreciate being chosen to go on such trips – especially if parents and carers know their selection was on the grounds of good behaviour and attitudes. I've previously used our reward budget to subsidise costs to parents, and with help from the school's business manager, identified innovative ways of reducing the accompanying transport costs to and from school.

Finally, pre-COVID, some of my colleagues came up with perhaps the best reward/recognition event of them all – our School Summer Festival. Chosen students from all years – again, based on buy-in to school values and expectations – were invited to an afternoon of music, magic, fun fair activities and free ice cream. The event has proved to be a success both times it's been run, and I look forward to its return in 2024.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
up to 250 words: name and info... Bit
Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture at an inner city academy

CPD – what *not* to do

As teachers, the process of teaching ourselves better practice should be second nature, right? Alas, that's not always the case, observes **Adam Riches**...

We've all sat for hours through CPD sessions, but it's not always hugely clear how much is gained. Balancing the need for professional development and relevancy to staff is a difficult task. Often, the best CPD sessions in schools are those provided in the right way at the right time – but it's not always as simple as that.

It's hardly a secret that CPD isn't always done well (nor that the person delivering it isn't necessarily responsible for that). So what *does* make for a good CPD session?

1. Relevance

Getting CPD right for everyone in the room is an almost impossible task. Making aspects of the session relevant to all, however, is not. Effective planning and careful considerations should ensure that speakers and leaders alike spend their CPD time wisely.

The most relevant CPD for teachers and support staff will be that which is clear, simple to implement and – most importantly – likely to leave an effect on the learning at your school that can be sustained. Ensuring a tentative balance between research-informed content and context-specific application will make for sessions that are valuable to teachers. If the content is too research-focused, you run the risk of alienating your context. By the same token, if you focus too much on '*How we do it here*', you risk of creating a silo effect where staff focus on the *how* and not the *why*.

CPD that promises to help reduce workload is, of course, universally relevant. With the workload issue now firmly on the radars of most leadership teams, it's worth ensuring that any dedicated CPD time presents teachers with opportunities to develop ways of managing their existing stress and workload, as opposed to merely adding extra things on to an already stuffed 'to do' list.

Front-loading CPD in PD Days isn't enough; staff need opportunities to develop their practice all year round. Saying something in a meeting in September, on PD Day, and then expecting to see it done in all classrooms is a non-starter. CPD needs to be planned carefully, and then drip-fed throughout the year to ensure that staff are able to process, apply, reflect and adjust accordingly. This process of development is cyclical, with individuals requiring time in order to effectively implement what they're shown in training sessions.

Morning sessions can be effective in terms of maintaining energy levels and harnessing input, but a lot of teachers like to prepare in the mornings. Some members of staff may also have family commitments that make it difficult for them to get in early. Scheduling afternoon sessions that take place after school tends to be the more traditional approach, but that's where you start to enter the realm of, '*Are we done yet?*', to say nothing of the battering your colleagues' energy levels may have taken over the course of the day.

> ***"If you're getting external speakers in, make sure they've undertaken the appropriate prep-work of actually getting to know your school first"***

The days of CPD amounting to whatever information SLT needed to dump on staff and expecting instant results should be a thing of the past. Good CPD sessions are reactive to need, useful for teachers and form a part of the wider school vision.

2. Time

Schools are high pressure environments in which every minute of time is precious. With that in mind, if we want our CPD to be truly effective, we need to think about when the training takes place, and for how long.

Balance is the key when timing your CPD sessions for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. The sessions themselves ought to be short, sharp and relevant. We're all hugely economical with our time management when it comes to our classroom teaching. Why should the delivery of our CPD be any different?

3. Speaker(s)

There's a certain irony in how CPD for teachers will often be delivered by current or former education professionals, without taking into account any of the research-based theory or advice we know actually makes for good teaching. Sitting through a session on cognitive load can be made much more difficult when the speaker pays little heed to the extraneous load of their own information-dense, overwritten slide show presentation!

Effective CPD ought to be based on the same principles that are (or at least should be) in evidence in our classrooms each day. We wouldn't dream of standing up for two hours and hitting a class with a lecture accompanied by 54 slides, and then expect them to implement what we've told them with no modelling or scaffolding. So why would anyone ever think that's the best way of delivering CPD?

Then there's the ongoing debate of whether you should use internal staff or get external speakers in. Having had the privilege of serving in both roles, I can speak from experience when I say that both have their merits and pitfalls.

External speakers can reinvigorate staff by presenting new perspectives on familiar ideas, proposing different approaches to delivery and providing a sense of motivation. At the same time, however, external speakers will often lack the contextual understanding of school-specific daily routines, styles and methods. Even approaches proven to be hugely effective elsewhere can be quickly filed under '*That won't work here*'. If you're getting external speakers in, make sure they've undertaken the appropriate prep-work of actually getting to know your school first.

Internal speakers, on the other hand, will have an intricate understanding of how the school works, and usually be better placed to tailor the session content to the school's context. It can also be advantageous to have existing relationships between speakers and staff who know each other well, often resulting in more sustained and honest engagement throughout the session.

This can be a double-edged sword, though. Staff may not value the CPD if they don't believe in the teacher delivering it – which can be especially true if it's a member of SLT with a light teaching timetable, and little evidence of them actually implementing the ideas they're bringing to the table.

If an internal CPD speaker want to be good at what they do, they must be able to exemplify at all times the practice of the ideas and concepts that they're seeking to deliver.

4. Forward vision

A keen awareness of what's needed for your context is fundamental to the delivery of effective CPD. This may be informed by learning walks, staff reflections or feedback from your heads of department. It doesn't matter where you get your information from – so long as it's a true reflection of the climate within the school.

Once those needs have been identified, they should be married up with the school development priorities. That's when leaders can start thinking about how best to provide their staff CPD, in the most appropriate order and via the most effective structure. Being informed and planning time into timetables for development is important, for both stability and consistency.

That said, leaders must also be adaptable when it comes to their CPD content. There needs to be some degree of flexibility that allows for different responses according to the emerging needs of staff. For that reason, having an firm grasp of your priorities, using that as the bones and then fleshing this out as the year progresses will provide the basis of a good, sustainable CPD plan.

CPD needs to be seen as valuable by staff. Once that mindset is in place, anything's possible. Showing that you're prioritising staff by taking CPD seriously can be a huge motivator, and lead to rapid development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Adam Riches is a teacher, education consultant and writer

What about the boys?

When you look at how boys are faring much worse academically, socially and developmentally compared to girls, there's clearly a need for us to do something, says **Hannah Day** – but what?

Catlin Moran's new book, *What about Men?* has had, shall we say, mixed reviews. Some adore it while others have derided it, but one thing I think holds true is that men (or in the case of secondary education, boys) need and deserve more of our attention.

From consistently poorer GCSE results, to being influenced by the likes of Andrew Tate and reports of sexual assaults in educational settings – for many of our young men, something is clearly amiss.

What can schools do?

Feminism is about equality, not just women. While there is still progress to be made, feminism has been incredibly effective in advancing the rights of women. With women having previously been so badly represented both legally and socially – even as recently as within our own grandmothers' lifetimes – it has been, and continues to be a vital cause.

Now we need to do the same for boys.

Boys are more likely than girls to be excluded from school. More likely to be addicted to drugs, alcohol or pornography. More likely to be homeless or in prison. And more likely to commit suicide.

In the same way that women have strived to address issues of equal pay, reproductive and divorce rights, and opportunities in the workplace, boys too have their own unique set of challenges. If we don't acknowledge these male-centric issues and seek to put in place meaningful support, boys won't be equipped to grow into the men we expect them to be.

For too long, a certain strain of popular feminist rhetoric has amounted to '*You've had it good, so step aside – and don't think of complaining, it's the girls turn.*' Yet in reality, this helps no one. As Moran herself said in a recent BBC interview, supporting men "*Is the second half of feminism.*" We must use feminism to ensure boys aren't left behind, and that those girls who have been so effectively supported get the men they deserve. Not just as partners, but also as fathers, brothers, friends, colleagues and more.

Stuck in the narrative

The current problems go beyond structural issues. Since women secured the right to vote, girls have also been consistently told that to be a women is to be part of the sisterhood. Many of us have been taught to celebrate our femaleness, and that said femaleness can take many forms.

We may choose to wear make-up and dress in pink one day, then don an overall and fix the car the next. The narrative of what women can be and do has expanded considerably over time to include areas and domains long considered traditionally male.

For boys, however, their own narrative remains relatively narrow. For many, their notions of masculinity remain stuck in the 1950s, anchored to outdated ideas that to be male is to be strong, domineering and powerful. But being all these things constantly is nether desirable, nor possible.

> **"Throwaway comments about men being 'useless', 'stupid' and 'incompetent' are heard and felt"**

To feel anxious, for example, is perfectly normal, and certainly not indicative of being lacking in masculinity. So too is enjoying anything that might be broadly considered feminine. If 'female' things feel right to someone who happens to be male, then it follows that those things must be part of being male too. It's our definitions that need changing, not the lived reality.

Check your language

Cast your mind back over the day just gone, and try to recall any throwaway comments you might have heard (or made) about how useless men are. Now feminise all the masculine words in those comments. I'll do a few for you.

- "It was me and five useless removal women. None of them knew what they were doing."
- "I asked her to pick up a birthday cake, and what did she get? A tray of donuts. How are we meant to put candles on them?"
- "Well I'm ready. I asked her to pack an hour ago, and she's still not started."

Ouch, right? This is what boys hear all the time. Throwaway comments about men being 'useless', 'stupid' and 'incompetent' are heard and felt. If boys aren't shown respect, then how can we expect them to give it?

This has, in part, helped create the fallacy that respect and tolerance are somehow part of a zero-sum game; that respect given means respect taken from elsewhere.

It's easy to spot signs of how this has taken hold in recent years, across males of several generations. And those of who teach in schools need to counteract it as much as we can.

When the monsters look like clowns

Then there are the frequent comments and views expressed around men being violent. It can't be denied that we are contending with a society-wide issue of violence perpetrated by men against women.

Yet while it's estimated that 1.7 million women were victims of domestic abuse

last year, there are still many more men who are decent people, living decent lives, compared to those who are not.

It's possible for us to collectively acknowledge that men are *more likely* to be violent to a female partner than vice versa, while simultaneously making it clear that this isn't the norm.

In a piece headlined 'We need to be specific when we call men creepy' (see bit.ly/ts127-B1), *Sunday Times* columnist Charlotte Ivers highlights how men can often be referred to via terms suggesting that they're dangerous, when in fact they're not. In her view, we need to distinguish though our language between *dangerous* and *unwanted* behaviour, because otherwise, "*The clowns look like monsters and the monsters look like clowns.*"

There is a difference between predatory men, and men who have yet to fully internalise the conduct required of adults. Though if we continue to do nothing about the deluge of porn our young people are consuming, then it's even less likely that this conduct will be passed down.

Preparing the soil

Blaming men for their behaviour is only fair if they've been shown how to behave and still chosen to do otherwise. For many, their teachers will come from a wide range of sources and backgrounds – many brought to them via the rabbit hole that is the internet, with little correction or alternative teaching from elsewhere.

Note, this isn't an excuse. You can, of course, criticise specific behaviours or individuals – but we should try to avoid criticising *all* men.

We've perhaps spent so much time saying men have had it easy, that we've fallen into repeatedly putting them down without thinking about it. If boys are made to feel that they have it all, while at the same being given so little, they'll end up feeling both confused and resentful.

This then allows ample space for negative influences to take root – but only if the soil has been prepared. By persisting in such thoughtless use of language, we're actively preparing that soil.

And yet, despite so little being done to support the specific needs of our young men, the majority are still growing up to become wonderful adults.

Imagine if we could make changes that serve to celebrate and build up the boys in our schools, in a similar way to how girls have been nurtured. What might the next generation look like then?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College

WHERE ARE THE POSITIVE MALE ROLE MODELS?

Meet the 'traditional masculinity' rebels...

Cary Grant – The stay-at-home dad

Cary Grant was suave, sexy, successful – and at the age of 62, turned his back on one of Hollywood's biggest careers to raise his daughter, who he referred to as his 'best production'.

Alistair Campbell – The mental health advocate

After successful careers in journalism and politics, Campbell has added 'mental health advocate' to his CV. Painfully honest and regularly open about his own struggles, he has aimed to normalise and de-stigmatise living with mental health issues.

Mo Gawdat – The happiness guru living with grief

Mo Gawdat was a tech millionaire who found himself to be unhappy. Now he is a grieving father who, through his experiences and research, is aiming to spread happiness to a billion people through the idea that happiness can be both learnt and shared.

Jürgen Klopp – The champion through hard work and common sense

Klopp has got a shelf full of silverware earned through decisions and actions we can all learn from. It takes hard work, you have to keep going, failures and mistakes will happen – but through all of that, remain positive, work with others and try new things.

Ask and you'll receive

Michael Chiles explains how classroom learning can be enhanced through the careful use of diagnostic and reflective questioning...

Teachers are known as 'professional question askers'. The use of questioning in the classroom is a common strategy for getting students to engage in critical thinking and self-reflection, and to become active participants in their own learning.

Indeed, questions are the tool in teachers' toolkits that arguably do most to help activate the vital transfer of knowledge to support the teaching and learning process. Teachers spend an estimated 40% of their classroom time in this question-response mode. Here, we'll explore the importance of diagnostic and reflective questions in secondary school classrooms, and provide some practical tips for incorporating them into your teaching practice.

Understanding diagnostic questions

Questions are an important cog in the assessment process, since the questions asked and the answers generated will often determine what teachers must do to close knowledge gaps. The verbal feedback given, along with any follow-up 'probing' questions, are also key.

If the questions asked don't effectively reflect the curriculum taught, the information produced will provide limited support for moving the learning forward. Getting the questions right in the first instance is therefore fundamental to effective assessment in the classroom.

Diagnostic questions can be designed to assess students' prior knowledge, identify misconceptions and gauge their understanding of a particular topic of study. They're able to serve as a powerful tool for both teachers and students to understand where they stand in their learning journey.

One way diagnostic questions can be used by teachers is at the beginning of a lesson, as part of a 'do now' activity. The questions for 'do now' activities will typically be conceived as low-stakes recall queries intended to activate prior knowledge, and to check for understanding before teaching new information.

Tailored instruction

For example, Tom is getting ready to teach a Y8 class who are about to start a new unit on hazards in geography. He wants to check if his students have remembered some of the key processes that cause hazards to occur, before building on this knowledge to look at the formation of a tsunami.

The use of diagnostic questions in this scenario will be important for Tom to determine if he needs to reteach the foundation knowledge before diving into the next part of the curriculum. The knowledge Tom gains from asking these low-stakes questions should help him tailor instruction to meet the needs of his students, so some diagnostic questions he could ask might include:

1. *Which crust is denser – continental or oceanic?*

2. *When one crust moves underneath another, this is known as...?*

These two diagnostic questions will help Tom check students' prior understanding before moving onto the main information he wants them to learn in this lesson. Tom may also want to use some 'do now' questions to check for common misconceptions in his subjects.

In any case, by posing diagnostic questions in this way, he can pinpoint any misconceptions or misunderstandings that students may have. The insights gained from asking these types of questions will enable him to more precisely target interventions aimed at addressing these issues, thus allowing for more effective and responsive teaching.

When Tom proceeds to review his 'do now' questions, it will provide an opportunity to engage his students in active participation by providing verbal responses to the questions asked. This engagement will help to foster a more stimulating and interactive classroom environment, enabling Tom

"Your aim should be to create questions that promote more than just the reciting of facts and details about your subject"

to give immediate feedback based on students' responses – feedback that will be crucial for guiding students in the right direction and correcting misconceptions.

Cumulative knowledge quizzes

Diagnostic questions can also be used in the context of cumulative assessment, for both formative and summative purposes. Cumulative knowledge quizzes create an opportunity for teachers to assess whether students can remember the nuts and bolts of the curriculum being taught. When drafting diagnostic questions for these kinds of knowledge quizzes, it can be useful to keep the following structure in mind:

Component 1: Current knowledge
Component 2: Prior knowledge
Component 3: Explicit subject vocabulary

The questions used in these assessments can be based on two formats – open response and multiple choice. Open questions allow students to respond with greater freedom and in more detail, drawing on their prior knowledge.

Some examples of open response questions might be:

- *What is urbanisation?*
- *Why do we use semicolons?*

In contrast, closed questions would look like this:

- *Which of the following is the correct definition of urbanisation?*
- *Romeo is from the House of Capulet – true or false?*

Open response questions will require pupils to think harder, because the lack of plausible answers means they'll need to recall without any prompts. However, they do also allow students to demonstrate wider knowledge, particularly when there are multiple options for students to pursue when providing their answers.

Multiple choice questions, on the other hand, can be used to determine common misconceptions by presenting plausible distractors. When devising the diagnostic tests for these assessments, though, your aim should be to create questions that promote more than just the reciting of facts and details about your subject.

The tests ought to provide enough of a challenge that students are prompted to really *think*. This will in turn provide better insights for you as their teacher, which you can then build on to become more responsive to them in the next part of the learning journey.

Thinking about thinking

During a lesson you might also want to use reflective questions. These are questions that go beyond the surface level to promoting metacognition – the ability to think about one's thinking.

Reflective questions are often useful when asking students to consider the key points of the lesson just gone. This opportunity for reflection lets students to reflect on what they've just learnt, while considering the areas in which they're strongest and any areas for further development.

However, asking students to merely reflect on their learning without guidance is likely to be ineffective, as students will need clear criteria in order to reach an accurate judgement. This is where the use of success criteria for application tasks can provide guidance for reflection. This form of self-assessment will then empower them to take ownership of their own learning and make any necessary improvements.

IN SUMMARY

- Incorporating diagnostic and reflective questions into your secondary school classroom can contribute towards enhanced learning experiences for students
- Diagnostic/reflective questions can also enable teachers to become more responsive practitioners
- The right kind of reflective questions can further empower students to take a more active role in their own learning
- By using questions strategically, teachers can create more engaging, interactive and ultimately effective learning environments that will prepare students for success, both academically and in later life
- Start asking those meaningful questions and watch your students thrive

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
An experienced school leader and principal examiner, Michael Chiles has been teaching for over 15 years. His latest book, *Powerful Questioning: Strategies for improving learning and retention in the classroom*, is available now (£14.99, Crown House Publishing)

Moving on from SECTION 28

Two decades may have passed since the repeal of legislation designed to prevent LGBT+ inclusion within schools – but as **Jo Brassington** and **Adam Brett** explain, its legacy persists...

Close your eyes for a moment and picture 'a school' – what do you see?

Maybe you see classrooms, hallways, or those uniforms of your own schooldays you always hated. You might call to mind your favourite teacher, or least favourite teacher, or perhaps visualise yourself as a teacher now, standing before your class.

The specifics don't necessarily matter – the point is, everyone can come up with a picture, because we all hold an image in our minds of what 'school' looks like, or even feels like. And by the same token, most of us also hold judgements of what we believe schools *should* look like.

A truly safe space

Where do these pictures come from? To a large extent, of course, they derive from our own interactions with schools. Outside of individuals who have been exclusively home-schooled, the vast majority of us will have experienced educational spaces in ways that have gone on to shape our later perceptions and understanding of them.

Conversations around education are often contentious because everyone has buy-in to the discussion. For most people, this experience will stem from their own school days. If you're an educator like us, it can sometimes feel like you never really left...

Now, close your eyes again. This time, picture a school that can be described an LGBT+ inclusive space. What do you see?

Really, try to imagine it. What might it be like in a school where genuine efforts have been made to foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive space for LGBT+ people – a truly safe space for all young people, their families and staff?

Is the space you're imagining similar or different to the school you imagined earlier? Is it similar or different to the schools you've previously experienced? Is it similar or different to the schools you're helping to create now, as an educator?

The seed and the shadow

Our guess is that you probably found the second school harder to imagine. You were able to picture 'school' easily enough from your existing reference points and direct experiences. Imagining an LGBT+ inclusive educational space is harder, because for most people reading this, the system you were educated under *was not LGBT+ inclusive*.

It's likely that your own education didn't make space for LGBT+ people or their stories. In fact, for a long time there was legislation in place to purposefully ensure this community of people were not even spoken about in schools.

Section 28 was an amendment to The Local Government Act of 1986. Introduced in 1988 by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, it stated that a school '*Shall not intentionally promote homosexuality*' or '*Promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.*' This legislation remained in place until being fully repealed in 2003.

"Making something 'not illegal' isn't the same as empowering and educating teachers to make LGBT+ inclusion a reality"

20 years may have passed since then, but Section 28 is still impacting educational spaces today. Picture a seed planted in the middle of your school. Day after day, week after week, year after year, that seed grows untamed, for over a decade. The roots stretch out below ground, consuming every nutrient and preventing anything else from growing. The plant stretches way above the school, towering higher and higher each year. Its dense leaves cast a dark shadow.

That's how we picture Section 28. The legislation was a seed of silence, first planted in our schools in 1988. This seemingly small seed of silence was subsequently able to thrive and expand into every corner of the UK's educational spaces, creating shame as it grew.

After 15 years, at the point where the legislation was repealed, the plant was cut down – but the roots remained. The silence and shame that grew in our schools, and in the consciousness of the people occupying them over that time remained very much rooted. Making something 'not illegal' isn't the same as empowering and educating teachers to make LGBT+ inclusion a reality. Repealing Section 28 did not unroot the damage it caused.

Pride and progress

When we ask you to imagine an inclusive school, what we're really asking you to do is *reimagine*; to take your experiences in a non-inclusive system and reimagine them. To take an educational history of silence and shame and reimagine it. To take your perceptions and ideas of what a school should look like, and reimagine them for a better, more inclusive, future.

Almost every person working in our school – and certainly the majority of those leading them – were themselves educated at a

time when Section 28 prohibited LGBT+ inclusion. We now need all of those educators to collectively reimagine new educational spaces with diversity, equity, and inclusion at their very core.

It's this process of reimagining that led us to create Pride & Progress – a podcast, platform and community working together to amplify the voices of LGBT+ educators and reimagine our educational spaces. We recently published our first book, *Pride & Progress: Making Schools LGBT+ Inclusive Spaces*, which is illustrative of our work in seeking to combine the lived experience of our podcast guests with theory and research.

Before moving forward, we must realise the need to unroot the silence and shame from our schools. We must take time to explore the history of LGBT+ exclusion, and how it continues to impact upon the individuals studying and working within our schools. We have to explore heteronormativity and cisnormativity, and understand what barriers there are to inclusion before working to minimise or overcome them.

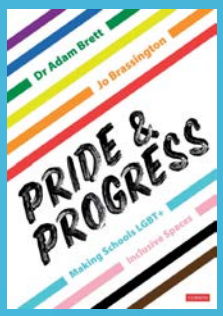
A pivotal moment

Finally, we can look deeper and examine some further themes of LGBT+ inclusion in schools. These include the power of creating community spaces and of intersectionality, the strengths of LGBT+ leaders, and how allies in leadership can further inclusion.

We must take account of identity and reflect on the professional balance between personal identity and teacher identity. We call for all people to be part of this collective reimagining, to be allies and advocates.

This is a pivotal moment. For the first time ever, it's now part of our legal and moral duty to reimagine our schools and make them more inclusive. Indeed, every educator should feel encouraged and enabled to do so, but it's a moment that calls for a collective reimagining.

Our work at Pride & Progress has explored how we can begin that process and finally step out of the shadow of Section 28. If you feel inspired to join us, get in touch and get involved. Together, we can create educational spaces where every person feels free to be themselves, feels seen, feels safe, feels supported and feels like they belong.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jo Brassington is a non-binary educator, currently teaching in primary schools, and has delivered guest talks and training for various schools, universities, LGBT+ organisations and charities.

Dr Adam Brett is a secondary teacher, ITT course leader and LGBT+ researcher, having taught in secondary schools for 13 years and recently completed a doctorate examining how LGBT+ teachers experience their school environments.

Their book, *Pride and Progress: Making Schools LGBT+ Inclusive Spaces*, is available now (£19.99, Sage)

THE PILLARS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The pillars of inclusive education are **Language**, **Curriculum**, **Representation**, and **Visibility**.

Educators must not only establish a common inclusion goal, but also develop a common inclusive language. The language around LGBT+ inclusion is new and developing, and we must understand it by having meaningful conversations about it.

We can then consider matters of curriculum, representation and visibility. How are you usualising the acceptance and respect of diversity in your school? How are diversity and LGBT+ identities represented and visible in your school?

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ASK THE EXPERT

"We can make school a safe space for all"

Laura Mackay outlines the comprehensive support schools can provide for their LGBT+ students with the help of Just Like Us' Pride Groups Programme

What is Just Like Us' Pride Groups Programme?

Our Pride Groups Programme is a national network of student-led, lunchtime or after school clubs in secondary schools, where LGBT+ and ally pupils can meet, learn and get support. We help schools to get set up if they've never run a LGBT+ club before, but also provide valuable support to schools which already have a club with our resources, one-to-one guidance, training and community of school staff championing LGBT+ inclusion.

Why are LGBT+ school clubs so important for pupils?

Our research shows that even in 2023, LGBT+ pupils are twice as likely as their non-LGBT+ peers to experience bullying, so the importance of safe spaces cannot be overstated. In fact, 94% of school staff champions agreed that being part of a Pride Group had improved pupils' wellbeing – a key factor in regular school attendance. Additionally, Ofsted wants schools to show they are inclusive. By supporting student mental health, we can make school a safe space for all.

What do teachers get out of the Pride Groups Programme?

Our Pride Groups programme is designed to be delivered by pupils, for pupils. We provide training each term for both staff champions and student leaders, and our Pride Groups receive brand new resources every two weeks. As a former teacher, I know that there is never enough time in the day, so it is vital that our resources are ready-to-go and easy for student leaders to use.

EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Laura Mackay

JOB TITLE:
Chief Executive, Just Like Us

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
LGBT+ inclusion in schools

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Hearing from schools about the positive impact of Just Like Us' programmes

How do Pride Groups benefit the wider school community?

Pride Groups are a brilliant way for LGBT+ and ally pupils to learn from each other, but they also allow pupils to feel empowered to make positive change in their school community. Pupils in Pride Groups can contribute to a culture of LGBT+ inclusion throughout the school using Just Like Us' resources – for example, by creating displays and assemblies, helping to look at school policies, or even being involved in training for staff.

What kind of resources does Just Like Us provide to Pride Groups?

Our Pride Groups programme has a different theme each term, encouraging an intersectional approach to inclusion, with easy-to-use resources and training centred on those themes.

Examples of previous termly themes include 'Disability Pride' and 'Black LGBT+ Joy'. The resources range from full lesson plans to shorter creative activities, keeping Pride Groups flexible, exciting and engaging for young people. All this for the price of just £99 + VAT for a year.

ASK ME ABOUT

COMMUNITY: The Pride Groups programme connects hundreds of school staff running LGBT+ groups across the UK
COMPETITIONS: Just Like Us' Pride Groups have the chance to win competitions and even national awards
SUPPORT: Just Like Us helps staff champions every step of the way – from toolkits and how-to guides, to tailored one-to-one support
W: justlikeus.org E: info@justlikeus.org

Subtractive SOLUTIONS

Don't believe anyone who tells you that applying the principle 'less is more' to your teaching amounts to laziness, says **Colin Foster**...

Now more than ever, teachers are constantly expected to 'do more with less'. School schemes of learning bulge with content that must be taught, and both formative and summative assessments that must all be prepared, administered, marked and fed back on.

With students having so many diverse needs, teachers are vulnerable to the emotional pressure that comes from knowing – and being regularly reminded – that their students only get one chance at their school education. It seems as though teachers must always do more and more, with diminishing support and ever fewer resources.

And if one dares object to climbing this endless mountain, they're seen as somehow conforming to the 'lazy teacher' stereotype beloved by some politicians, but which runs completely counter to reality among all the teachers I know.

Additive solutions

Perhaps part of the problem is that we tend to assume every new problem or situation requires something additional to address it. According to a recent paper published in the journal *Nature* (see go.nature.com/3PmB44E), when presented with a range of different kinds of problems, most people's natural default tends towards suggesting *additive solutions*.

In other words, people will think of something extra that can be done to improve the situation, in the form of new strategies or alternative approaches, while systematically overlooking potential *subtractive* changes that could address the issue equally well, or even better.

Imagine a doctor with a patient who turns up complaining of side effects resulting from medications they've been prescribed previously. The doctor's first thought might be to propose yet more pills to deal with said side effects, with a view to possibly prescribing further pills later on to address any side effects caused by the new medication.

This might occur more naturally to the doctor than questioning whether some of those existing pills might instead be discontinued, and if that could address the problem instead.

Subtractive solutions

It can be hard to spot situations in which less really is more – areas where we might see improvements through the act of removing. However, it could be well worth investing the time and effort needed to discover these opportunities for deletion.

When setting essay assignments, teachers will often encourage students to be concise and cut out unnecessary words. This can make their writing more precise, easier to read and punchier, hence the written feedback sometimes given by English teachers to '*Remove unnecessary words you don't need from your writing!*'

But it takes time to carefully perform this kind of editing, and it requires effort. Yes, we may be reducing in order to hopefully end up with an improved piece of writing – but there's no getting around the fact that the process of reducing will itself

"People will think of something extra that could be done to improve the situation, while overlooking subtractive changes that could address the issue equally well"

entail having identify where and how it can be performed.

Mark Twain is said to have once written, "*I didn't have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long one instead.*" Yet investing time in thinking about what might be removed could well provide us with subtractive solutions which, in the long run, will improve things for both teachers and students alike. Subtractive solutions are also likely to be cheaper in terms of both time and resources, and therefore less wasteful and more sustainable.

Finding subtractive opportunities

So, where might we find those situations where subtracting something from teachers' duties will be more beneficial than adding something new? It's often said that when someone asks you to do something extra, you should consider responding with, '*What should I stop doing – or do less of – in order to create the time and space for this new thing?*'

If we were to simply try and incorporate every good new idea we encounter into our existing practice, we would quickly become overwhelmed and perform our existing tasks less well, to the detriment of our wellbeing.

The possibilities for subtractive solutions will be different for different teachers, and vary depending on subject areas, specific situational circumstances, your school's overall context, teaching styles and so on. There are no one-size-fits-all suggestions.

The important thing is to actively look for your own subtractive opportunities, rather than assume that those I'm about to suggest below will work for you. But for illustrative purposes, here are three ways in which you could initiate the process of thinking about subtractive solutions.

1. Stop planning lessons from scratch

Why burn time trying to reinvent the wheel late at night, when suitable lesson materials could be available online or collaboratively-produced with colleagues? Always look to prioritise the modifying and improving of existing resources over starting with a blank sheet of paper. There should be no shame in making good use of existing materials, instead of feeling that everything must be designed and then redesigned all over again by you and every other teacher.

2. Delegate your marking to students wherever possible

If students are unable to tell whether something they've written is right or wrong, or good or bad, how can they be expected to be able to produce high quality work?

Far from being the 'lazy' option that it might initially seem, engaging students in the business of evaluating their own responses will help them better identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work – and thus, how it might be improved.

This kind of role switching can be especially valuable where assessments are concerned. Assuming the mantle of an examiner can help students see how their work is likely to be perceived, and what they might be able to do to enhance it.

3. Hold fewer, shorter meetings

Just because a meeting is happening at break time, that doesn't mean has to occupy said break time's entire duration. Similarly, if a meeting is scheduled for a 'free' period, it needn't fill all the time available to you within that slot. Meetings should be as long as necessary, and no longer.

Even finishing a meeting just five minutes early will give everyone a welcome break before whatever is due to be happening next. What's even better is if, through careful preparation, a meeting can be avoided altogether, with the relevant information instead circulated by email to those who need to know.

Being subtractive

These above three suggestions may not be right for everyone. In other schools, they may already be commonplace. Yet the point remains that looking for subtractive solutions will help us to reduce workload and make what we do leaner.

This will in turn help us to clarify our priorities, and consequently focus our attention on doing fewer things better – which is surely desirable for both teachers and students.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The power of SELF-DETERMINATION

Ofsted's expressed priorities can exert a huge influence, but pleasing the regulator doesn't have to be to the deciding factor in school leaders' decision-making, says **Adrian Lyons**...

I was commissioned to write this article on the same weekend that *Schools Week* carried a piece titled 'Ofsted must get its own house in order'. Regular readers will know that I agree with the sentiment. Indeed, I found myself nodding much of the time as I read. And then exclaimed out loud '*No!*'...

The statement to which I took exception was "*Where new priorities are identified, government needs to resist reaching too quickly for the accountability lever. Likewise, campaigning groups should think twice before calling for it.*"

Straitjacket of accountability

Sadly, a culture has been established whereby many school leaders will determine their curriculum in order to meet the preferences and prejudices of the Chief Inspector.

Since January 2017, Ofsted has sought to micromanage the curriculum (i.e. the whole of what goes on in school, not just National Curriculum subjects). Careers, financial capability, citizenship and enterprise aren't prioritised by Ofsted, and are thus not prioritised by many school leaders.

Yet even within this supposed straitjacket of accountability, many school leaders are courageous enough to try and provide a curriculum that meets the needs of their students, rather than the regulator. One example might be 'enterprise education' – defined by Ofsted as developing the employability skills of young people, and improving their understanding of the economy, enterprise, finance and the structure of business organisations.

In its 2016 'Getting Ready for Work' report (see bit.ly/ts126-AL2), Ofsted found that '*The extent to which schools used their curriculum to prepare pupils for the world of work was largely dependent on whether school leaders considered it to be a priority.*'

Having led the Ofsted project leading up to the 'Getting Ready for Work' report, I was able to personally witness the report's observation that '*In the schools where there was limited focus on enterprise learning, school leaders told inspectors that they see themselves as accountable for outcomes narrowly focused around examinations.*

"*The development of enterprise was often seen as potentially distracting from delivering improvements around examination results.*'

Unaffordable luxuries

Anyone who has heard me present over the last six years will have witnessed my party piece, where I cite an example of two schools located quite near to each other. They were both 'comprehensives', but one was a high attaining girls' school in an affluent area, while the other was a relatively low attaining mixed school in a more disadvantaged area.

In one, the headteacher told me he had just dispensed with his careers lead because '*It was a luxury we couldn't afford*'. In the other, the governors had told the headteacher that careers and preparation for work had to be prioritised, even if that meant making cutbacks elsewhere in the curriculum.

Audiences are always surprised to learn that the governors prioritising work preparation were at the high attaining girls' school.

Narrow indicators

Consider also financial education. Despite being on the National Curriculum, this is a focus of neither Ofsted, nor the exam league tables. All 11- to 16-year-olds should now be receiving financial education – yet the IfS University College Young Persons' Money Index (see bit.ly/ts127-AL1) shows that the majority of 15- to 18-year-olds still receive very little, if any financial education at school, or from further education providers.

According to Olly Newton, executive director at the Edge Foundation, "*The current inspection and accountability regime, with its focus on exam results and a narrow range of indicators, is constraining innovation.*

"*In line with the Times Education Commission, which called for a 'balanced scorecard', we believe schools should be reporting on a broader basket of indicators, including wellbeing, inclusion and extracurricular opportunities.*"

It was therefore good to hear Sir Martyn Oliver – the HMCI designate set to succeed the outgoing Amanda Spielman – remark at his Education Select Committee pre-appointment hearing that Ofsted should focus on '*Checking that children are safe and receive a high-quality education*'.

A return to such principles would, at the very least, give leaders more confidence to innovate.

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

Engage your BEDROOM PRODUCERS

Technological advances have made bedroom music production an increasingly popular hobby among teens – but how many of them feel encouraged to pursue music at GCSE? **Helen Tierney** takes a closer look...

Secondary music departments presently face a perfect storm of challenges. GCSE music entries continue to plummet, A Level music is frequently not offered in schools, and staffing music remains an issue.

Many departments have been reduced to just one full-time teacher and resorted to carousel-style arrangements in terms of their arts provision. Music teachers cite schools' emphasis on the EBacc, Progress 8 and STEM as contributing factors in the falling uptake of music. Another, more fundamental challenge is that many teenagers who are musically active outside of school feel uninspired and alienated from what KS4/5 courses are offering.

Making the connection

In 2019 Youth Music produced the 'Exchanging Notes' report (see bit.ly/ts127-M1), which advocated for a new model of music in schools, focusing on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people. Arguably more relevant now than ever, it suggested that music education "*Has to be reimagined to become more relevant and inclusive of all young people.*"

A lockdown-prompted burgeoning of interest in musical tuition, alongside demand for domestic digital performances by both famous names and relative unknowns, is still alive – not least among our secondary school students. The 'Exchanging Notes' report may have predated the pandemic, but one of its key findings concerning teenage amateur music makers still very much applies – "*They don't see the connection between their interest in music and their school music lessons.*"

Jayne Barnes, an experienced HoD and head of A Level music centres, has found that musical literacy can be a considerable hurdle when trying recruit these home studio musicians onto KS4/5 music courses.

"I have come across students who are very musically active outside the classroom, but struggle because of their lack of musical literacy," she says. "Hopefully, teachers will have spotted them earlier on in KS3 music lessons and offered interventions to fill gaps. It's up to us to reach out with support for transition into KS4 and beyond.

"It can be disappointing for students to enter secondary music and find that creative use of music technology is frequently absent"

"As experienced teachers, we need to find ways of harnessing that interest in technology outside of what's offered in the classroom. You can practise lots of KS4 /5 activities and bring in homework recordings. Universal musical features lend themselves to all influences."

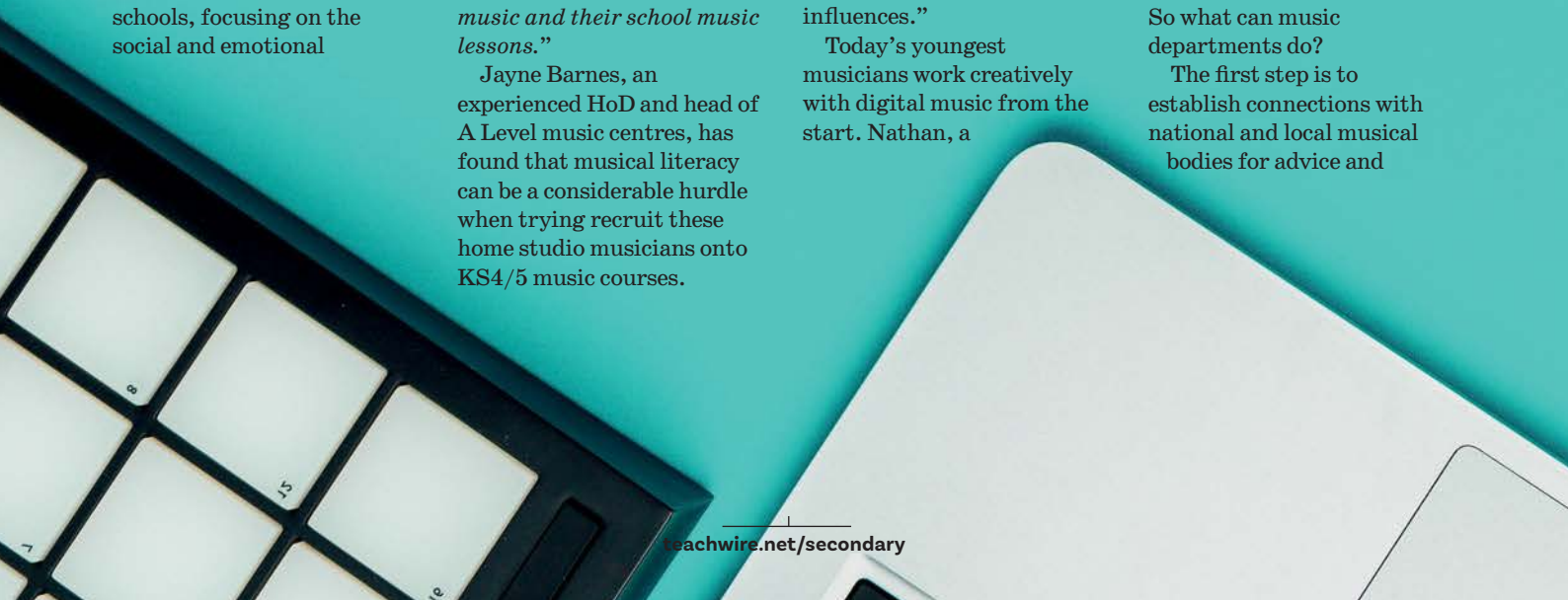
Today's youngest musicians work creatively with digital music from the start. Nathan, a Cambridgshire-based Rock Steady band leader, is well aware of just how switched on his students are."Students in KS1 and 2 talk about recording and Garageband as part of informal play. I know that primary pupils engage with TikTok music trends. Technology has made more students aware of musical choices, and can really help them develop a good ear."

Unfulfilled aspirations

It can therefore be disappointing for these students to enter secondary music and find that creative use of music technology is frequently absent from the classroom and even extracurricular activities.

Research published by the LSE in 2020, in an article entitled 'Connecting and Disconnecting learning between home and school' (see bit.ly/ts127-M2) concluded that, "*Many of the aspirations for using digital technology to connect the domains of home and school remain unfulfilled.*" So what can music departments do?

The first step is to establish connections with national and local musical bodies for advice and



support. One groundbreaking organisation looking to bridge the gulf between formal music education and young people's interests is the Camden-based Roundhouse. As well as overseeing a working performance venue with a history of iconic rock and pop performances by the likes of the Rolling Stones, Hendrix, Elvis Costello and countless others, it offers a host of schemes and support aimed at secondary-age musicians.

Roundhouse currently works with approximately 7,500 young creatives across London each year through a variety of music, performance and media projects. I asked some of the staff there, including Education Programme Manager Lucy Nicholls, how they perceived the challenge of combining bedroom music production with the curricular content of KS4/5 music courses.

Advice and trends

Do you perceive a disconnect between students' own musical activities and the demands of studying music?
Traditionally, the curriculum has focused on virtuoso skill and learning orchestral instruments. This work remains important, and is of significant cultural value – but it doesn't always allow young people to explore and express their own musical tastes, and create the styles of music they listen to outside of school.

Many of the young people who use our creative studios do so to practise 'band instruments', such as drums and guitars. Many more use our spaces to produce their own music via digital platforms and other new technologies.

What are the latest music tech trends you're currently seeing young people engage with?
TikTok has had a huge impact on the music industry, particularly in launching the careers of new artists, since so many young people now engage with music via the platform. A viral song on TikTok can kickstart someone's career, and also lead to an outpouring of further content creation by young people.

AI is something else that young people are using to create music. Although there are some legitimate areas of concern with AI, there is also huge potential.

Are you aware of any of these trends being taken up in curricular music?
We haven't seen this work being explored in secondary schools yet, but we'd love to hear examples of it happening.

What advice would you give heads of music who feel they're struggling to keep up with technology – both personally, and with respect to their cash-strapped departments?
We would encourage teachers and heads of departments to reach out to local arts and music organisations, as there are so many free and low cost opportunities available for pupils. Arts organisations are keen to make connections with schools and colleges, and want to share their expertise through workshops, training, long term projects and sometimes free tickets to performances. There are also great resources available online.

What can Roundhouse offer secondary age musicians?
We offer young people the space and equipment to access creative opportunities independently, all at minimal cost, such as £2 an hour for a studio hire. The open access nature means that young people can experiment and build their own creative network, away from the pressures of school or more formal learning environments.

National entries for GCSE and A level music have fallen considerably. What action would you like to see to help tackle that?
We would love to see creative education valued within the curriculum and given the same weighting as sport, which also has huge emotional and physical benefits for young people. We'd like to see stronger connections between cultural organisations and local schools and education providers, to ensure we're all providing opportunities and educating young people about careers in the creative industries – which are among the fastest growing in the UK.

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)

YOUR SCHOOL'S GOT TALENT

As well as making connections with various external organisations, some in-house ways of boosting music uptake could include...

EARLY SHOWCASES
Listen and share examples of home-produced music, starting in Y7. Give the music made by your KS3 composers a platform during the autumn term open evening, or your first parents' evening of the academic year.

INCLUDE 'LISTENING LINKS' IN YOUR NEWSLETTERS
Look into adding a download link to a student-composed track in a forthcoming newsletter. Depending on the level of interest among your students and school community, could this become a regular item?

'FUSION' PROJECTS
Create opportunities for pairing or grouping your acoustic instrumentalists with digital creatives on joint projects.

ASSEMBLY PLAYLISTS
Set aside time for playing back student-created tracks during assemblies or in form time.

MUSICAL AWARDS
Include a 'digital music' category in any musical awards you might be running.

FOCUS ON: HUMANITIES

Ideas for teaching subjects which help us understand how what we were, and where we are, have come to shape who we are...

How can we encourage students to better engage with history and geography lessons?

THE AGENDA:

Why Black History *Month...?*

Lindsay Galbraith looks at why schools, and history departments in particular, should be mindful of the 'subject siloing' effect that Black History Month can inadvertently bring about...

I want to be honest and open with all who read this article by admitting, I spent years getting diversity and inclusion wrong.

As a teacher and curriculum leader, I was certain that because the lives of Black people, women and other under-represented groups were featured in my curriculum via dedicated lessons, assemblies, tutor time posts or even homework, I was getting it right.

However, I now know that I was being naïve, and had fallen into the same narrative traps that have ensnared many others. I write these words having since educated myself, researched widely and spoken to a number of Black educators, including Emily Foloronshu (@MissFolorunsho) and Thandi Banda (@STEMyBanda) , who were gracious enough to help me write this article.

Deeper thinking

Black History Month (BHM) is a well-intentioned celebration of the invaluable contribution made by Black peoples from the African Diaspora to British society. To be clear, I'm not going to argue here that we should scrap BHM. Indeed, it must be made an integral part of the school year.

I am, however, keen to explore the need for us to think more deeply about the time we allocate in the history curriculum to studying the contributions and developments made by Black people. With big, one-off events such as BHM in place, do we risk treating the contribution of Black people as merely an add-on, for one month only?

Are BHM and other similar events just tokenistic attempts at inclusivity? Should we instead be looking to seamlessly connect the perspectives of broader, more inclusive groups, in order to arrive at a more thorough understanding of life in the past?

"We shouldn't give our students the impression that Black people 'began' as slaves"

Where we are

In recent years, some schools have adopted a more diverse and inclusive curriculum in which the contributions and developments of Black people are interconnected to the perspectives and contributions of non-Black people – but at least in my experience, this is far from the norm.

In primary schools, Black History Month will typically involve a themed assembly and a month of topic-related activities celebrating the contributions of individuals like Martin Luther King or Jesse Owens. This is a start, but does it really show that we value the contributions made by Black people to the country and world we live in today? To what extent does such activity meaningfully help students understand cultural diversity?

In secondary schools, BHM tends be delivered through assemblies, workshops and PSHE lessons – but again, it's activity that's limited to one month, and often not linked to any other current learning, resulting in its purpose being lost amongst students. Surely we can do better than this?

The power of history teachers

We history teachers have a superpower – a knowledge of the past that enables us to shape the minds and perspectives of all the children who pass through our classrooms.

I often think about the hundreds of students who have left school knowing that '*Hitler invaded Poland in 1939*' or that '*William the conqueror used castles as a form of social control*' because I told them so. A legacy of knowledge is created in our classrooms. The perspectives and viewpoints we consider in our lessons will live on in the minds of the next generation, and possibly the generation after that – so it follows that we have an enormous responsibility to ensure that what we teach is as well thought out, representative and accurate as it can be.

So, with that in mind, how many of our students could name a Black inventor? How many could name a Black man or women who has led social change in the UK? Very few, would be my guess.

And yet, history is full of Black people who contributed to the development of the world we currently live in. Yes, Martin Luther King was a globally important figure within the Civil Rights Movement – but don't children in the UK deserve to also learn about more relatable individuals who have contributed in some way to the development of the country they know today?

This issue extends beyond the history curriculum. Every subject area, across all Key Stages, can do more to value and celebrate the contributions of Black people – because if we don't, we perpetuate the narrative that history is almost exclusively shaped and told by non-Black individuals.

Rethinking curriculum design

While there has been some progress in ensuring history curriculums reflect wider perspectives, we must do more.

Consider how most schools will examine women's fight for universal suffrage in one

unit, and then the experiences and struggles of Black people during the height of the slave trade in another. I would argue that by isolating such topics, we present the groups concerned in a very particular way.

Instead, let's look at how we can design our curriculums so they reflect the perspectives of said groups within all topics. In place of standalone lessons, let's encourage a more organic reflection of different groups at each curriculum stage. At the same time, we shouldn't give our students the impression that Black people 'began' as slaves, but rather look more widely at African kingdoms, and the roots of humanity in Africa.

The amazing work of Katie Amery and Teni Gogo in this area is worthy of high praise. Earlier this year they authored a textbook for Oxford University Press titled *African Kingdoms: West Africa Student Book (KS3 History Depth Study)* – a book that reshapes the curriculum work schools have previously done on African heritage, and prioritises the responsibility we have as teachers to maintain a legacy of knowledge that challenges racism and preconceived stereotypes around Black people.

The standalone problem

Looking back, I now shudder to think of those lessons, homework assignments and other tasks I planned and delivered to ensure I'd essentially 'ticked the inclusion' box. Because whatever it was, it certainly wasn't an inclusive curriculum.

The fact that we were having to even consider how to 'add' the perspectives of different groups into our topics illustrates just how naïve we've been in this area. Such perspectives should be woven and sequenced carefully throughout curriculum content, with history teachers considering more widely those sources and interpretations that might help to broaden the knowledge base.

For example, diary entities and letters from Black soldiers serving in WWI regarding their experiences of the trenches could easily be used alongside sources from white soldiers. Alternatively, when covering the recruitment of soldiers in WWI, we could cast our topic net more widely by directly comparing recruitment drives on the home front with those pursued across the wider Commonwealth.

When I started researching this topic, I was shocked to find that some schools don't celebrate BHM at all, but celebrate it we must. In Emily Foloronshu's view, BHM can be made both pertinent and explicit by going beyond just the US Civil Rights Movement, to thinking more deeply about how the event links to Black people's lives in the UK.

Above all, collaborate and connect with other educators and academics. Because there's so much good work being done nationwide to ensure we all reflect on our responsibilities, as history teachers, to devise an inclusive curriculum that accurately and consistently reflects the perspectives of different communities.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

- Spark debate among your teams. Is your curriculum inclusive, in terms of there being seamless connections between the experiences of wider communities and your current perspectives?
- Reflect on whether your curriculum feeds into stereotypical ideas about Black people. Are you only teaching the history of Black people from the slave trade and beyond?
- Read widely. A great place to start would be Emily Folorunsho's chapter in the recently published *What is History Teaching, Now?* handbook edited by Alex Fairlamb and Rachel Ball (£18, John Catt)
- Recruit a team of teachers and students to help you with your planning for Black History Month
- Consider cross-curricular links beyond the history curriculum and spark debate across your school

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Lindsay Galbraith is assistant vice principal – teaching, learning and curriculum at a school in Telford; follow her at @MsGHist

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>
> *Dr Jason Arday, Associate Profession in Sociology, Durham University and Trustee of the Runnymede Trust*

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Windows on the world

The right kind of display can drive home just how dynamic and profoundly important the subject of geography really is, says **Steve Brace**...

The clarion call for many geography teachers is that, '*Geography is everywhere!*' When I was a teacher myself, I'd often say this to encourage pupils in taking an interest in how geography can shape current affairs.

On reflection, however, whilst it's true that everything happens somewhere, not everything is necessarily *geographical*. I could have been more nuanced by asking students to consider how geographical process were shaping events, and by making better use of my classroom displays. So if you're in a similar position yourself, consider using any of the following seven ideas...

1. #geographer inthenews

Looking up the #geographerinthenews hashtag on X/Twitter will connect you a range of news stories all featuring some degree of geographical research, and/or commentary from a professional geographer.

Recent examples include a contribution by Dr Ella Gilbert to a 10 O'Clock News item concerning Antarctic sea-ice; Dr Andy Hong writing in the New York Times on how people's experience of cities change with age; and Professor Liz Stephens speaking to the BBC about climate change and the Libyan dam disaster.

Incorporating this material into your displays can help highlight how important news stories and events can often have geographical underpinnings, and demonstrate geography's relevance to timely socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

2. 'Speak like a geographer'

How and when to use geographical terminology is an important skill. You can encourage this by displaying a 'Speak like a geographer' board that prompts the use of geographical vocabulary over generic or incorrect terms. The table below shows what this might look in practice for a Y7 class.

Fig 1.

Yes!	No!
North	Top of the map
Trading goods and services	Selling stuff
Heavy precipitation	Rubbish weather
Arctic ocean	Northern Ocean
Local residents	'Normal people'
'Africa is a continent'	'The country of Africa'

4. 3D objects

You can also make useful displays out of 3D objects. Displaying a Barbie doll during a trade unit, for example, can illustrate her annual sales (£1.3bn) and carbon footprint (39,000 tonnes CO2). You could also display the world map used in the recent *Barbie* film adaptation, which caused a geopolitical row by including dashes similar to the 'nine-dash line' China uses to promote its territorial claims.

5. Inspirational geographers

Displays can promote the value of geography by using key #choosegeography statistics. You could include the finding that geographers have above average employment rates, or the 'top 10 salaries' among geographers. Teachers Laura Pellegrino and Rachael Robinson have shared the templates they used to create impressive 'Careers in geography' (bit.ly/ts127-G1) and 'Inspirational geographers' displays (bit.ly/ts127-G2), enabling others to create their own.

6. Diversity

Ofsted's recent geography entry in its 'Subject report series' (see bit.ly/ts127-G3) found that some geographical teaching around place was simplistic, inaccurate and/or outdated.

It's therefore important to use varied, diverse and up-to-date images in your displays, and perhaps link with events such as Black History Month.

You could, for example, represent Black geographers on your classroom walls, such as the students and graduates making up the Black Geographers (blackgeographers.com) group, or the Black geographers immortalised by The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) as Geography Superheroes (see bit.ly/ts124-G4).

7. Cultural touchstones

Flag up TV broadcasts, books and podcasts that encourage pupils to read, watch or listen to some extra geography. Lenzie Academy in East Dunbartonshire, for instance, maintains a regularly updated 'Geogglebox' TV listing display (bit.ly/ts127-G5). You could also highlight episodes from the RGS' Ask the Geographer podcast series, which has previously covered topics including the crypto industry's carbon footprint, how not to build a new capital city and the war in Ukraine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Steve Brace is head of education at the Royal Geographical Society; to find out more, visit rgs.org

"Does everyone have a clipboard?"

Thomas Forbes-Whitehead looks at those considerations that ought to be at the forefront of teachers' minds when planning and executing their next field trip...

What are your fondest memories of the time you spent at school? For many people, school trips will often be high on the list – be it the overnight residential, the geography field trip to the coast in the name of long-shore drift or the drama trip to see a West End show.

Many of us will fondly recall such occasions, and for good reason. These were times when the more pedestrian elements of daily school life would be suspended in pursuit of cultural enrichment, new understandings and, yes, often some fun too.

It's important to have happy memories of one's education. People able to reflect positively on their own education are more likely to instil similarly positive attitudes in their own children, performing a crucial role in the age-old battle for hearts and minds we undertake when engaging students and their families. And in post-COVID settings, this is arguably more necessary than ever.

Closing the gaps

There is, however, an even more urgent focus as we seek to close the gaps created in the aftermath of the pandemic – namely student progress and outcomes.

As teachers, we can be at our most effective when actively revisiting the question of what we're teaching and why we're teaching it. Our responsibility is to provide a broad, balanced and flowing curriculum – a key part of which involves constantly striving to teach the right things efficiently, and with unwavering consistency.

To that end, it's essential that we apply the same criteria to any trips we take our students on. School trips have the potential to be transformative in terms of the progress our students make, not least where the subject of history is concerned.

> *"It's imperative that students are both prepared for the trip, and then guided in reflection afterwards"*

Yet for that to be possible, the trips we plan must actively benefit our students' learning. As you make decisions around the trips your school will undertake over the coming academic year and beyond, keep in mind the following questions:

1. Why do you want to go there?
2. How will the experience be weaved into the curriculum you teach?
3. What benefits will students get from this trip that can't be obtained in the classroom?

Over the last two years, my history students have participated in a range of different trips. In each case, by asking the above questions throughout the planning process, and by honestly reflecting on what worked and what didn't, we've successfully ensured that our history field trips have had real, demonstrable impacts on students' understanding and subsequent academic progress.

Site-specific experiences

Let's look more closely at the question of why you would want to go somewhere. One unfortunate consequence of the pandemic was the near total abandonment of school trips everywhere, often for well over a year. This has left us faced with students who, in many cases, have been deprived of hitherto taken-for-granted educational opportunities.

This can manifest in troubling ways – perhaps most noticeably in the limited hinterland knowledge many students now possess, and the related impact this can have on their understanding. Some would argue that history trips are almost uniquely placed within the school curriculum to address this, by virtue of the sheer breadth of topics they can encompass, and to a large extent that's true.

Three of the trips we undertook in last academic year saw students visit London museums with direct, explicit links to what they were learning in the classroom. The fact that these museums were all located in our capital city, marking the first such visit for many students attending, added important layers of meaning to the trips' already well-established academic focus.

So why did we chose those museums specifically? Why not simply access online materials and avoid entirely the logistical and financial challenges such trips typically present? Because they are world-class institutions with exhibits that don't exist anywhere else. This covers not just the question of why we wanted to go there, but also the question of how our students benefited in ways not possible in the classroom.

Immersive recreations

In history, we're teaching students about people, places and ideas that are often long dead, or for which students lack significant frames of reference. These trips afforded our students in-person access to sources and expertise they simply couldn't experience within school.

For example, our Y8 students study the transatlantic slave trade, before going on to examine the industrialisation of Britain and its subsequent emergence as a global power. At the Museum of London Docklands they have explored the dark alleyways of London's 'Sailortown' – an

immersive recreation of a ramshackle Docklands district at the height of the Industrial Revolution. The trip brought to life what students were learning about in ways not feasible in the classroom, and provided access to a host of sources that reinforced, sustained and developed their understanding.

Our Y9 students have similarly benefited from trips to London's Imperial War Museum. Over two days, the cohort not only explored enormous, world-class WWI and WWII military exhibits, but were also able to visit the museum's Holocaust Galleries.

This presented a structured, guided opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a scholarly analysis of the Holocaust at the country's designated national repository for historical Holocaust information and sources. Again, neither experience would have been replicable within the classroom, and in both cases, the value and impact of the visits was greatly heightened by intrinsic links to what the students were studying.

Before, during and after

As a department, we strove to fully embed the trips in the curriculum. Our sequences of learning provided students with the necessary knowledge and understanding to fully benefit from what each trip offered. Regular signposting in anticipation of the trips, along with crystal-clear expectations concerning what students would do with what they had learned afterwards, ensured that student progress and understanding remained at the forefront of each visit. This in turn meant the students' learning actively benefited from them.

We can now see what a history field trip should look like if it's to be truly meaningful in this new, post-COVID age. The reasons for visiting somewhere must be obviously beneficial, but it's imperative that students are both prepared for the trip, and then guided in reflection afterwards.

To do this, we must therefore extend the trip beyond the event itself – via in-class learning that references the trip, the resources and activities students undertake during the visit itself, and in the questions asked of our students afterwards.

Accountability from students for their own learning isn't always easy to obtain – an issue that can be magnified in the context of field trips. But when we apply the same robust criteria and reasoning that we deploy in our planning, teaching and assessment, the rewards are there to reap.

No trip is without its challenges. Each one we undertake helps us further refine our planning and supervision processes. But by taking time to map out the 'what' and the 'why' of your trip, using the uniqueness of your chosen destinations to propel student understanding, and by empowering students to reflect visibly and meaningfully when using what they have learned, we can ensure students' learning actively benefits. While also hopefully giving both you and them the chance to have some fun along the way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Thomas Forbes-Whitehead is a head of history based in the East of England

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REASONS TO TRY...

5 The Crown Estate sustainability resources

Inspire pupils to learn about sustainability in two new Minecraft Education worlds and develop the green skills they need to take action on climate change

30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Crown Estate has teamed up with Microsoft UK for a sustainability education initiative featuring two Minecraft Education worlds based on the iconic Windsor Great Park and an offshore wind farm. Both worlds come with curriculum-linked lesson plans and resources co-created with teachers, inspiring students to build their knowledge of biodiversity and renewable energy, and develop the green skills to take real world action.

1 NET-ZERO FUTURE

Do you want to tackle climate change in the classroom? As we learn more about its potentially catastrophic consequences, it becomes more important than ever that the UK meets its sustainability targets. The Crown Estate sees firsthand the implications of biodiversity loss across all its urban and rural holdings, from the iconic Windsor Great Park to the seabed and coastline it looks after. It has launched this initiative to help young people develop the green skills and sustainability knowledge they need to thrive in a net-zero future.

2 A POSITIVE APPROACH

There is growing eco-anxiety amongst young people, with 95 per cent of pupils in the UK saying they're worried about climate change. Schools, of course, want to help, but 70 per cent of teachers haven't been equipped or feel confident to cover it in lessons. That's where this initiative comes in. By framing climate change through the lens of biodiversity and renewable energy, it provides a positive, solutions-focused way to engage pupils, and the resources include all the information teachers need to feel confident with the topics without adding to your workload.

3 THE POWER OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

The Crown Estate has partnered with Microsoft UK to create two new worlds for Minecraft Education – the Offshore Wind Power Challenge, and the Conservation Quest at Windsor Great Park. These worlds empower students to explore real-world sustainability themes from the comfort of your classroom.

They can design and develop a new wind farm to power a town while protecting marine habitats or complete four quests to manage the ecological health of the historic Windsor Great Park.

THE CROWN ESTATE

Contact:
Find out more and download resources at **www.thecrownestate.co.uk/minecraftedu**

4 CURRICULUM-LINKED LESSONS

To accompany the worlds, The Crown Estate has created a series of free, fun, curriculum-linked lesson plans aimed at ages 11-14 to help you and your pupils get the most out of this immersive experience. Building on the themes from different challenges and quests, they provide everything you need to get started – including a teacher guide, lesson slides, worksheets and guidance videos. Created with teachers to align with the National Curriculum, the lessons cover topics spanning science, geography and even engineering to help you include sustainability and green careers across your curriculum.

5 INSPIRE REAL-WORLD ACTION

Studies show that young people's fears about climate change are associated with a lack of agency – where they're not sure how to make a positive difference.

That's why these lessons culminate in taking real-world action, supported by the Taking Action Toolkit. It supports pupils to take the skills and knowledge they learn in the virtual worlds and apply them in their community. By showing young people they can take meaningful action for nature recovery, you can grow their confidence and empower them to be changemakers.

KEY POINTS

You can access the lesson plans and Minecraft Education worlds at education.minecraft.net (Minecraft Education license required for world)

The resource pack comes with free guidance films, which tell you more and give top tips for using the lessons and Minecraft Education worlds with your class

The lessons were co-created with science and geography teachers alongside biodiversity experts at The Crown Estate

The flexible Taking Action Toolkit can be completed in a few hours, or over the course of a term, so you can use it in whatever way best suits you and your pupils

Don't say 'easy'

You might mean well when reassuring students that a task 'will be easy' – but such words carry weight, and can have unexpected consequences, warns **Gordon Cairns**...

For songwriters, 'easy' is a good thing. '*Take it Easy...*' sang The Eagles in the 70s, telling us to not overthink things and just relax. Lionel Richie was meanwhile '*Easy like Sunday morning,*' his problems now over after emerging from a difficult relationship.

In fact, almost everywhere in life – from 'Windows Made Easy' PC user guides, to cheap flights courtesy of EasyJet – 'easy' is something that's actively desired and sought after.

Education is no exception. '*Don't worry,*' the teacher reassures their class, '*This is easy.*' The student exiting the exam hall assures her friends that she's done well; after all, '*It was easy.*' In our everyday lives, this outwardly innocuous, commonly used four-letter word is often something which broadly benefits us.

Hearing versus meaning

In the classroom, however, things aren't quite as straightforward as that. When a class teacher describes the work about to be undertaken as 'easy', this is obviously said with good intentions. The purpose is to reassure pupils that what they're about to do is within their capabilities, and won't be too taxing – '*Don't worry, you've got this...*'

Yet there can often be a marked distinction between what individual students hear, and what the teacher actually means, creating the opposite of the intended effect.

Those who do indeed find the work straightforward might well wonder what the point of doing the activity even is, and therefore hand in careless, slapdash work. Conversely, those students who actually don't find the task easy at all will worry they're not as clever as their classmates, and fear falling behind. Their reasoning – '*If this is meant to be easy, what's the rest of the year's work going to be like?*'

Worse still, this latter group of students won't want to embarrass themselves by asking the teacher for help. After all, this work has already been described as 'easy'. What's the teacher going to think about them if they can't understand it?

"Those who do indeed find the work straightforward might well wonder what the point of the activity even is"

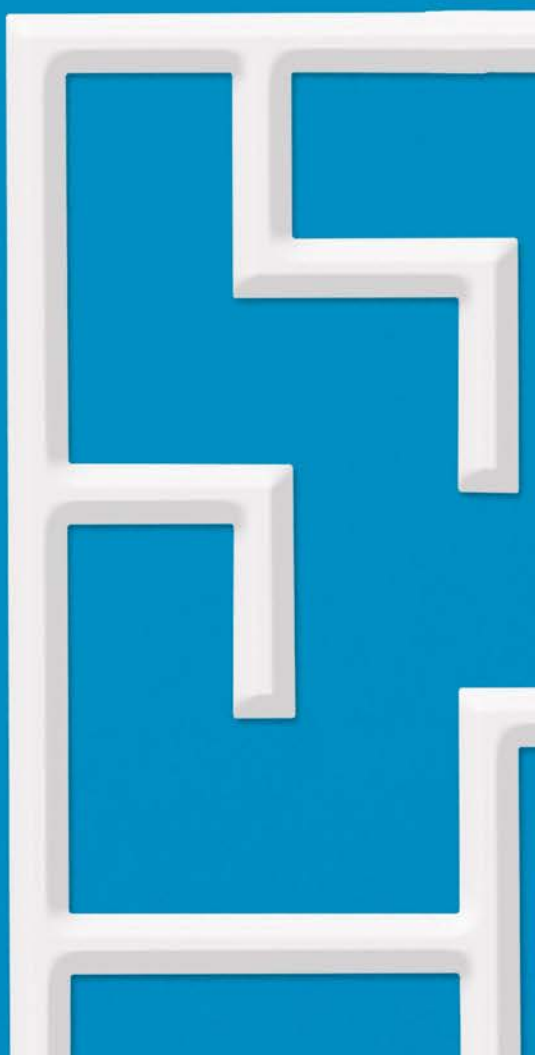
For yet another section of the class, you're effectively building a wall between you and them. Any perception they might have of you as a superior, aloof, university-educated expert in the subject will be confirmed if you loftily dismiss work they think is important as 'easy', and appear unable to even recognise, never mind actually address their barriers to learning. '*Yeah, easy for* ***you****...*' they may think, resentfully...

Learning intentions

None of this is to say that classroom learning has to be perceived by students as being 'difficult' if it's to be worth doing. But if you genuinely think the classwork you're setting should be handled with relative ease by the young people sat in front of you, it might be worth asking yourself what the learning intentions of the session are.

If it's to recap previous learning, you could perhaps frame the lesson thus, rather than dismiss its purpose as somehow less important than new learning. On the other hand, if you're setting work that's easily completed in order to give the class a confidence boost, describing the tasks as 'easy' will undercut what you're trying to do (though it's worth noting that, say, Manchester City don't feel the need to play Fort William of the Highland League before every big match to improve their confidence levels).

Back when I was training as a Forest School teacher, I fell into an easy trap. We trainees were sat in a circle around a fire pit in the middle of the woods, while the course leader showed us how to guarantee a successful fire every time by secreting cotton wool dipped in Vaseline amongst the twigs, branches and dried leaves that made up the fuel. The idea was that students would aim to hit the highly



flammable cotton balls with a spark from their flint and steel firelighters. "*To make lighting the fire easier for the students?*" I asked the instructor (rhetorically).

"*Don't say 'easy',*" she replied. "*We're creating achievable goals for the participants.*"

After the students had spent time collecting usable dry wood from the forest floor, then choosing a safe spot for their carefully structured bonfire, it would have been a poor lesson indeed if, for some reason, said fire wouldn't ignite. Guaranteeing that the fire would produce flames – even if only from the cotton wool – didn't render that whole process 'easy'.

A question of framing

That's a lesson I've since taken with me and applied not just to my instruction on how to build working fires, but also to how we frame the activities we set our students more generally.

This is partly because how we frame things for students is how they will end up framing it to themselves, with our words sometimes coming back to haunt us. It's more common for someone who has done well in an exam to think that the questions were easy, rather than conclude that their own hard work paid off, or that they're simply intelligent.

This can have the effect of diminishing their own input into their success, reducing it to the same level as luck, rather than prompting them to take credit for doing well. Any boost they might have had to their self-esteem is therefore removed.

However, don't take that to mean that we should tell our students that the work is 'going to be difficult,' as they might then encounter the nocebo effect – a psychological response which can sometimes occur when one expects to undergo a negative experience. For example, you're more likely to experience the side effects of medication if you're told beforehand exactly what they're going to be – even after taking a placebo.

Is it even necessary to foreshadow what the work is 'going to be like' at all? Your own thoughts on whether they're likely to find a given learning experience boring or exciting, time consuming or quick, or hard or easy ultimately isn't going to add anything of value.

Ironically, one of the most deeply annoying things about being a teacher is hearing someone from a different walk of life tell you how easy your job is – usually citing to the (supposedly) shorter working days and lengthy holidays. We hate hearing our own work described as 'easy', but are sometimes happy to tell our students that the work we're giving them is exactly that. This is good for them... how, precisely?

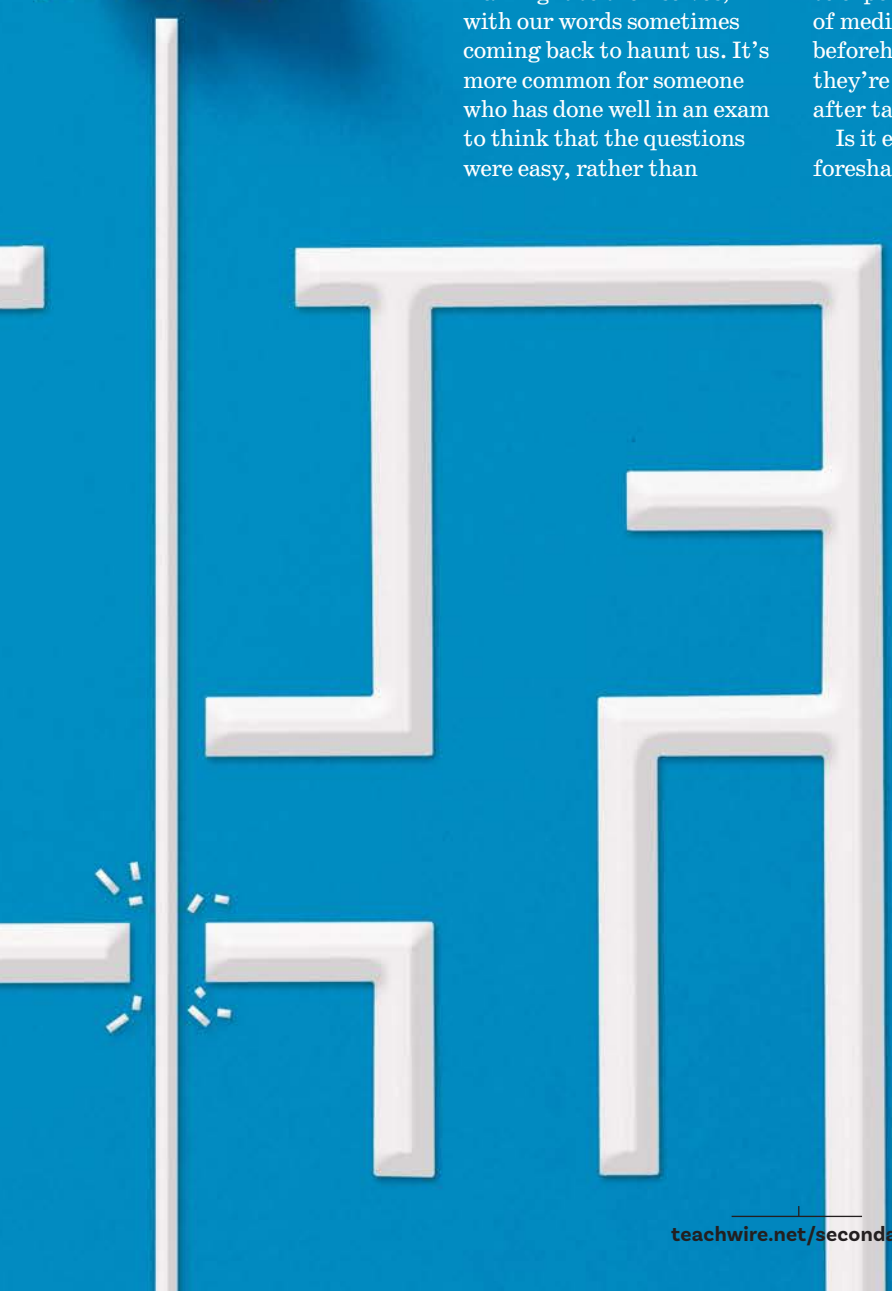
Next time you're tempted to describe a learning activity as 'easy', just pause and reconsider.

BEFORE DESCRIBING THE WORK AS 'EASY', ASK YOURSELF...

1 If the work actually *is* easy, why are you setting it? Materials that don't push your students out of their comfort zone won't bring them into the learning zone, where their skills and abilities can be pushed and improved.

2 Describing work as easy, when a student finds that to not be the case, may force the student in question into a state of stress, making it much harder for them to actually learn.

3 Do you have to even describe the work at all? A teacher's opinion carries more weight in the classroom than it does when you're socialising with friends and, say, discussing the *Barbie* movie. Yet even then, you'd probably refrain from sharing your coruscating opinions with the guy wearing the '*I Am Kenough*' T-shirt. Maybe you don't need to let the class know your opinion on the work they're about to do.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD; he also writes about education, society, cycling and football for a number of publications

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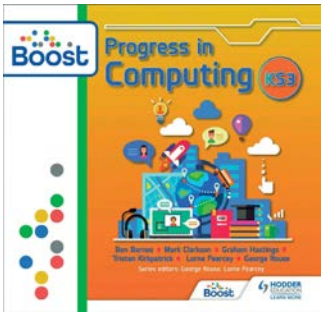

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Teacher knows best?

Our priorities when preparing teachers for the classroom aren't what they were – which might at least partly explain the recruitment issues we're now seeing, argues **Dr Shirley Lawes**...

There has been increasing concern in recent years over the diminishing interest among graduates to enter teaching, and the ongoing problem of newly qualified teachers leaving the profession within just a few years. These challenges now present a critical problem when it comes to some secondary subject areas.

Pay, workload and stress are no doubt all contributing factors, but we must look beyond the obvious and try understand the real underlying issues. To put it bluntly, teaching is now barely seen as a profession at all, with the process of learning to become a teacher largely focused on jumping through hoops to acquire 'competence'.

'Professional knowledge'

The clue is in the name we now use to refer to this process, with 'Initial Teacher Education' having been replaced by 'Initial Teacher Training'. As the contributing role played by higher education institutions has diminished, the acquisition of practical 'skills' on the job has become increasingly dominant.

As a result, the complex intellectual transformation of university graduates with specialist subject knowledge into professionals capable of transmitting said knowledge and enabling children to learn has been largely abandoned. The subject discipline element that used to be treated as a priority in many teacher training courses has gradually dwindled, to be replaced by the imparting of generic 'professional knowledge' focused more on the social aspects of schooling.

Over the past 30 years or so, teaching has come to be seen as a practical activity, first and foremost. Those charged with training teachers have therefore become more concerned with producing compliant, conformist and competent practitioners, rather than educational thinkers, which has in turn led to an increasing emphasis on evidence over ideas in relation to teaching.

This has had a transformative impact on the profession at large. The instrumental view of education now in the ascendancy, wedded to a managerial ethos, has encouraged an obsession with data collection and formulaic teaching that gets good exam results, but which fails to inspire most aspiring secondary student teachers once they take up their posts.

Competence-based assessment

The power of education to transform people through the passing on of knowledge has been stymied by three core goals – securing good exam results, doing well in Ofsted inspections and placing high in league tables.

In such a culture, student teachers will have difficulty in sustaining their enthusiasm and passion for their subject. Nor are they provided with ideas and knowledge around education that might enable them to better understand their practice, empower them to take risks and actively question certain aspects of policy and practice.

> **"The trainee teacher is left with little scope to experiment, develop their own teaching style or think independently"**

The introduction of a competence-based assessment framework for initial teacher training in 1994 was a watershed moment that fundamentally changed how the role of the teacher, and teaching more broadly are now understood. True, this new Partnership Model did introduce a more systematic and rigorous preparation for teaching. Yet the standards (list of competences) required to achieve qualified teacher status has arguably led to an oversimplification and crude recording of the complex judgements made by teachers in course of their work.

The hitherto often blurred conception of knowledge in the assessment of competence, or achievement of 'standards' is frequently boiled down to what's directly relevant and functional. The broader intellectual endeavour that might form part of the learning a teacher undergoes is thus either left unexamined or excluded completely.

A delivery model

Knowledge about teaching and education has become ever more narrowly prescribed against a set of 'skills' to be demonstrated in the workplace and assessed mainly by workplace practitioners. The importance of a teacher's knowledge of a subject discipline has been increasingly reduced, with 'standards' in this area often

ignored, or at best, regarded as secondary.

It might be justifiably argued that teachers trained to teach during the past three decades have been inculcated into a 'delivery model' of teaching a narrow, exam-driven curriculum, accompanied by data-driven measures of attainment and formulaic teaching methods. The watchword here is 'compliance' – with regards to both the accountability measures imposed by external agencies (notably Ofsted), and to the attitudes and skills developed in teacher training programmes.

I don't mean to suggest that teachers have become automatons; my aim is more to highlight the extent to which teaching has become prescribed, and how new teachers have been inducted into a school system that encourages conformity to a set of procedures based on specific objectives designed to produce narrowly defined 'learning outcomes', which can then be observed and evidenced.

Having a passion for one's subject and the knowledge to inspire young people seems to no longer be the fundamental *raison d'être* of the secondary teacher. Since the 1990s there has been a profound change in the 'teacher mindset', and a shift in how the professional practice of the teacher is understood.

The end of 'liberal education?'

The notion of 'liberal education' – that education is a 'good in itself' – has been severely eroded, with schooling now often viewed in instrumental terms under the assumption that the purpose of education is to serve the needs of the economy.

Learning to teach in this highly prescriptive context is both limited and limiting. The form that lessons should take is defined and checked, with aims, objectives and learning outcomes assigned more importance than the actual knowledge content of the lesson. The trainee teacher is left with little scope to experiment, develop their own teaching style or think independently about how they might inspire learners to learn a subject.

Yet learning '*how we do it here*' isn't enough. 'Tips for teachers', once disparaged, now seem to be accepted as all that student teachers need to start out in teaching. But that too is not enough. The very idea of teaching as a vocation, as a 'job for life', has largely disappeared. Schemes like Teach First actively encourage the notion of teaching being a short-term job, and that accelerated promotion is something to aspire to.

To me, this seems like a destructive view of an education system originally founded on a set of ideas around what it means to be human, which held teaching as a noble profession. The questions of what it means to be a teacher and how one should teach can only really be understood within the broader framework of educational knowledge.

A serious business

Student teachers are perhaps more susceptible to the power of ideas than some of their more experienced colleagues, so it may be that being initiated into a knowledge about education that goes beyond 'competence' is what's needed for education to once again become a dynamic enterprise more likely to attract well qualified and committed young people.

Of course, practical skills are important, but ideas about education and the fostering of scholarly attitudes shouldn't be ignored or deferred. It may seem old fashioned to talk about the foundation disciplines of education, but that's where powerful knowledge lies.

Far from being relics from the past, the study of education through its foundation disciplines and the serious study of pedagogy would provide student teachers with a critical grasp of present day issues, a better understanding of learning and greater sensitivity to their students' needs. This would revive teaching as a profession and encourage teachers to be 'educational thinkers', as well as competent practitioners.

Education is a serious business that concerns the future of society. As things stand, successive generations of student teachers have been teaching generations of school students with little understanding of the principles and theories underpinning their own practice, and therefore what education means.

I once heard a student teacher tell someone that she was on '*The crammer course from hell*'. No doubt, learning to teach is a challenging developmental process, but one that's insufficiently recognised. It's time for a fundamental rethink of teacher training and a restoration of its educational content. We need to recognise the power of knowledge and ideas, and the importance of developing moral autonomy across the teaching profession.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Dr Shirley Lawes is a lecturer in modern foreign languages at UCL Institute of Education

Addressing EXTREME BEHAVIOUR

How can schools respond effectively to onsite incidents involving weapons and other forms of serious violence?

On Monday 10th July 2023, Jamie Sansom – a teacher at Tewkesbury Academy – was stabbed by a student in the school corridor. The student responsible for the attack has since been sentenced to youth detention for 14 months.

We can reasonably assume that Sansom would have spent the prior weekend ensuring his lessons for the coming week were well-structured, and that the materials he'd need would be organised and ready for him to use. Like any teacher, he would have wanted to give his students the best learning experience possible.

The bell would have rung that Monday morning, like any other. Sansom would have welcomed his students into class and given them an overview of the lesson's activities. Duly settled, the students would have been ready to start the week – but that's not what happened.

Instead, Sansom was immediately rushed to the hospital following the attack, where he received treatment for what were thankfully non-life threatening injuries and was subsequently discharged later that same day.

Lasting impacts

Needless to say, these details describe a frightening situation. The incident serves as a sad, yet potent reminder that teachers can instantly find themselves in serious danger at any time, without any prior warning.

The aftermath of a violent incident will inevitably leave lasting emotional scars across a school's community. I've no doubt that the school concerned will have provided comprehensive support services for its students, staff and families – but what about those teachers across the country who would have seen the news and speculated as to the likelihod of a similar incident occurring in their own setting? How can they ensure that they and their colleagues remain safe?

In short, it's essential that schools provide adequate resources to support those affected by such incidents, including teachers. In an era of growing concerns over the safety and security of education staff, schools must adopt a multifaceted and proactive response to on-site incidents of extreme behaviour, particularly when those incidents involve the use of weapons. Beyond the obvious harms to the physical wellbeing of students and staff, such incidents will profoundly disrupt the learning environment and leave lasting psychological impacts.

Whilst it's not unheard of for some schools in England to maintain a part-time, on-site police officer, the vast majority of school staff will effectively be 'on their own' if called upon to respond to violent attacks. To some extent, this is understandable – after all, the vast majority of workplaces aren't expected to include an on-site police presence, so why should we require this of schools?

Unfortunately, there's no avoiding the fact that unforeseen incidents of sudden, serious violence can and have occured in schools. As such, responsible leaders ought to consider it part of their duty of care to take proactive measures that will ensure everyone's security.

> ***"A critical component of any effective response strategy will involve addressing the root causes of violence"***

So with that in mind, is there any statutory guidance for schools that could help explain what those 'proactive measures' might involve – or is it again up to individual schools and trusts to develop their own 'extreme behaviour' policies and responses when confronted with violent attacks?

Proactive prevention

Here, I'll outline four key ways in which schools might go about developing a form of 'proactive prevention' aimed at tackling incidents of extreme behaviour, consisting of the following:

1. Building positive relationships
2. Mental health training and counselling services
3. Provision of self-defence training for staff
4. Advanced security surveillance

1. Building positive relationships

Creating an environment in which students feel comfortable reporting behaviour concerns should be a key priority for all schools.

For a proactive prevention approach to work, it's necessary to have set procedures in place for

reporting and escalating reports, but also a clear emphasis on early intervention. By fostering a safe and nurturing environment, your chances of mitigating violent incidents will be substantially higher, while at the same time cultivating an atmosphere in which students can flourish academically, emotionally and socially.

Creating a sense of safety and trust within the school setting is a vital precondition from which everything else – including trust, security, safety and enriching educational experiences – will follow.

2. Mental health training and counselling services

A critical component of any effective response strategy will involve addressing the root causes of violence. Regular promotion of mental health awareness among students, staff and parents will empower your collective school community to identify, and hopefully address potential issues in your midst before they become much more serious.

This prioritising of mental health awareness should include providing access to counselling services and the creation of supportive environments in which students can seek help without fear of judgment – both of which can contribute a great deal to effective early interventions and the subsequent prevention of violent acts.

3. Self-defence training for staff

I would personally advocate for self-defence training to be provided to all members of teaching staff wherever possible, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, just the knowledge that staff have been trained in self-defence techniques can serve to discourage potential perpetrators. The training itself, if successfully rolled out, will obviously ensure that your teachers are better equipped to respond effectively in the event of future incidents.

Of course, all school staff will, and should, earnestly hope to never encounter any situations that will require their self-defence training to be exercised in practice – yet the reality is that being prepared will both enhance their confidence and dramatically boost their ability to remain calm and respond effectively in the face of danger.

Implementing self-defence training for teaching staff will mark a decisive step towards fostering a more secure environment that's still conducive to learning and growth.

4. Security and surveillance

Depending on the resources available to them, schools can additionally deploy advanced security systems, such as surveillance cameras and potentially metal detectors. Rolling out such systems can do much to prevent violent incidents at source – or at the very least, minimise the level of impact if the worst should happen.

This could be likened to having a deadbolt installed on your front door. Having extra security measures in place will make it that much harder for intruders to enter, or for students to gain access to areas of the site they shouldn't be in. If utilised intelligently and sensitively, an appropriate level of security apparatus can help to instil a further sense of safety and security for students and teaching colleagues alike.

Key takeaways

Ultimately, prevention is key. School leaders and teachers should promote a culture of respect, inclusivity and open communication across the school community at all times, which will help to identify and address issues before they have a chance to escalate into something more serious later on.

At the same time, school leaders should be proactive in their commitment to protecting the staff and students in their care. This is best done by equipping their teaching colleagues with the tools they'll need – in the form of resources, knowledge and appropriate training – to ensure a secure learning environment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Dalafu is a lead practitioner in maths, overseeing teaching and learning, teacher with 17 years' experience. For more information, visit behaviour-management.uk or follow @classroom_behaviour_management (Instagram)

A world of your own

Frances Hardinge unpacks how to teach a much sought-after storytelling skill in this age of sprawling fantasies and sci-fi franchises – that of world-building...

I am addicted to world-building.

My usual approach is to come up with one or more bizarre starting premises, and work out the logical and practical ramifications – because even an absurd world can be made to feel concrete if it's internally consistent.

When I was writing my novel *A Face Like Glass*, I knew I wanted the setting to be a labyrinthine, subterranean city that nobody was permitted to enter or leave. So I had to ask myself, how does this city get its air, light, food and water? If there's no night and day, when are people awake?

These might be boring, pragmatic questions, but the answers needn't be mundane or even sensible. (My answers in that case involved giant, glowing carnivorous plants, underground rivers, camel trains across the desert and 25-hour clocks.)

How, why and where

When world-building, it's easy to be distracted by questions of what, who and where, and the temptation to fill your imaginary landscape with creatures, people and places that grab the mind's eye. A village of four-armed ninjas! Zombie dinosaurs! A city made of glass!

The important part is remembering to work through the how, why and where. Why do any of these things exist, and how do they continue to exist? When did the zombie dinosaur problem first develop, and how are people dealing with it? How can the four-armed ninjas afford those nice, shiny shurikens and bespoke four-armed outfits? Do they sometimes have to hire themselves out as couriers or roof-repairers? And how do the residents of that glass city cope with the attendant insurance costs and privacy issues? How do all these bizarre elements interact?

Answering such questions can be time-consuming and fiddly, but the answers can often generate plot, detail and unique features for the setting so that it feels more solid. If you leave them unanswered, then those big, shiny 'cool' elements of your setting will tend to feel shallow, like set dressing.

> ***"The election of the first cat Prime Minister ushered in a lot of changes. There are statues of PM Fluffkins in every town square, and all public buildings have a cat flap."***

Splendid mayhem

When running a 'settings workshop' for a full class (Y6 to Y8) I'll sometimes encourage everyone to brainstorm the what, who and where first. I'll describe a storm at sea, and a ship being wrecked on a rocky shore. I then tell the students that nearly everybody on board has drowned, and that there's only one survivor – me.

I recover consciousness, and begin looking around to discover where I am. And they're going to tell me what I encounter.

I start by asking them what I'm lying on. What does it feel like? (At this point, someone may timidly suggest 'sand'.) I'll then tell them that I'm opening my eyes, sitting up and looking around. What can I see?

Initially, the responses will be a little cautious – but before long, the class realises they have an adult character who they can chase around an imaginary landscape, and who will yelp with panic when subjected to countless perils. They also realise that I won't block any of their ideas, including all the 'silly' ones. At this point, splendid mayhem tends to break loose.

Note, this is not an engine for producing a grim, grittily serious setting. The results tend to be anarchic, enthusiastic, varied and frequently very funny, but in a way that generally gets the whole class engaged.

At a certain point (usually with some difficulty), I'll call a halt to the brainstorming and get everyone to consider those *how*, *when* and *why* questions. I'll encourage them to come up with reasons for such bizarre phenomena coexisting in the same setting and invent a history. It will likely be a strange and amusing history, but that's not necessarily a problem.

Fates of quirks

Alternatively, one could approach the world-building process from another direction entirely. As previously mentioned, I'm used to starting from bizarre premises myself, before trying to work out how they will affect the setting. In effect, I'm starting with those *how*, *when* and *why* questions to help me work out the answers to *what*, *who* and *where*.

To use this approach, a class could be broken up into small groups, each of which is tasked with brainstorming a different country. Each group can choose a 'quirk' – some bizarre characteristic of this world that makes it appreciably different from our own. The students can either come up with their own suggestions, or pick out a single option from a pre-prepared list.

The groups can also be given a list of further questions to consider when fleshing out their worlds and deciding how their chosen quirk has affected everything in that particular country.

Some good sample questions here might include:

- When did the quirk begin? Has it always been there?
- Why does it exist? If nobody knows, why do people think it exists?
- How has it changed people's beliefs and their behaviour?
- How has it affected the country's history? Has it resulted in any new conflicts, religions, inventions, laws, jobs or crimes?
- What else is this country like? How advanced is the technology? What is the landscape like? In what other ways is it 'weird?'

- If you were to visit the country, what odd things would you notice due to its peculiar history?

There by a whisker

Let's look at one quirk by way of an example – *cats can use human speech*.

This might have affected the country's history in many different ways. Perhaps cats have always talked, with everyone regarding them as messengers of the gods. The cats themselves encourage this belief, but are careful not to push it too far: "*The gods demand an offering of tuna! Just... leave it there. I'll make sure they get it...*"

Or maybe the cats started talking 300 years ago, after which the dominant church decided they were possessed by demons. This prompted the general populace to kill all the cats they could find, resulting in mice and rats running rampant, which in turn produced terrible epidemics that wiped out millions. Now there are countless ruined ghost towns where survivors eke out a living (and persecute anyone still stubborn enough to be sheltering a cat).

Or... perhaps genetic engineering produced intelligent talking cats 20 years ago, since which time they have successfully campaigned for voting rights. The election of the first cat Prime Minister ushered in a lot of changes. There are statues of PM Fluffkins in every town square, and all public buildings have a cat flap.

Then again, maybe the cats didn't admit straight away that they could suddenly understand human speech. Instead, they spent years amassing information and reporting back to a Macavity-esque criminal genius at Cat Headquarters. Now the nation's politicians are cowed into obedience because the cats know all their deepest, darkest secrets. Cats rule the country, and everyone is waiting to find out what they intend to do with it...

These examples will hopefully show the students ways in which a single quirk can affect a whole setting's history. I'll leave you with some other possible quirks that you could try exploring...

- Instead of electricity, the setting has a power source that works in much the same way – except that you age twice as fast while using it...
- In this country, dreams are always distorted visions of something real that's happening somewhere else at that exact moment.
- 1 in 10 children can teleport a few feet by the time they hit puberty. Most children have no control over it.
- The possession or use of clocks is strictly illegal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Frances Hardinge is an award-winning children's author; her 11th novel, *Island of Whispers* (with illustrations by Emily Gravett), is available now (£14.99, Two Hoots).

IN BRIEF

- When answering the *what*, *who* and *where* questions (eye-catching things, creatures, people and places), don't forget the why, how and when (causes, history, repercussions, interactions). Thinking these things through gives a setting depth and detail.
- **Workshop approach 1**
  Brainstorm a setting as a class, inviting ideas of all sorts from the students. Then invite them to explain the world they've created, stitch it together as rationally as they can and forge a history for it.
- **Workshop approach 2**
  Divide the class into small groups, and have each group create a country with a distinct quirk – something that makes it different from our world. Then set them the task of envisioning the setting that might be shaped by said quirk.

A different path

Tamara Allen explains how the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust has adopted a 'think differently' approach to behaviour management across its schools

We know that many schools regard discipline and strict compliance as the only ways of achieving improvement, even if that leads to high numbers of exclusions. This compliance, accompanied by the threat of punishments such as exclusion and social isolation, is then used to effectively 'control' pupils' behaviour.

However, Dave Whitaker – director of learning at Wellspring Academy Trust, author of *The Kindness Principle* and an expert in inclusion and SEMH – believes this approach needs to be challenged. When speaking at a conference we hosted at the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust (LAAT) last year, he presented a strategy based around behaviour, kindness and unconditional positive regard.

We have since been working with him on developing a new outreach programme for pupils in our schools who we feel could benefit from this type of initiative.

Be curious, not furious

Teachers are only human, and can understandably feel frustrated when confronted by persistently disruptive, sometimes abusive pupils. Demonstrating kindness towards perpetrators in such instances can be a challenge, but there's growing evidence that being '*curious, not furious*' and trying understand the reasons behind a child's behaviour can be a successful approach in the longer term – at least for some children.

Attendance and SEMH data gathered by LAs in our region reflects growing calls for reform to existing arrangements. Those campaigning for change believe that excluding pupils or placing them in social isolation amounts to admitting defeat and may simply generate further resentment, thus feeding a vicious cycle of so-called 'bad' behaviour.

Rewards and sanctions

Many readers will be aware of the ongoing debates over the use of rewards and sanctions in schools. It's important to acknowledge 'good' behaviour, of course – but this could perhaps take the form of praise and extra responsibility, rather than the handing out of gold stars or similar.

Yet there's still also a need for sanctions – or at least consequences – for pupils breaching accepted standards of behaviour. There is, however, scope for these to be more in line with the concept of restorative justice, which would give children opportunities to face up to those affected by their behaviour and reflect on what they've done.

From our research, we believe there's evidence to suggest that an approach centred on kindness can genuinely work for some children.

That's why we're rolling out professional training for our teaching staff, school leaders and pastoral leads overseen by behavioural specialists who can advise on conditions such as autism and oppositional defiance disorder.

Developing solutions

LAAT is additionally planning to work with the internationally recognised education consultant Nina Jackson, who will assist our headteachers in applying these strategies in the classroom. Another of the speakers at our 2022 Conference, Nina is a highly experienced pedagogical and pastoral champion with a firm grasp of what makes classrooms and the people in them really tick.

Given the complexities of challenging pupil behaviour, it's important to examine all background factors and work not just with the individual child, but also any siblings they may have in the same or different schools, as well as their wider family. To that end, LAAT already holds TAF (Team Around The Family) meetings, where information is shared and solution-focused plans are devised to support the needs of the child.

This more relational approach to behaviour may take time to implement, but we believe it will be worth the investment. And who knows – existing non-therapeutic interventions and punishments may one day come to be seen as outdated and unacceptable as corporal punishment is today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Tamara Allen is deputy CEO at the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust; for more information, visit thelaat.co.uk

LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

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Thinking about ...

BUILDING A READING CULTURE

In July this year, the DfE published an updated Reading Framework (see bit.ly/ts127-LL1) which contained a section dedicated to 'Developing a reading for pleasure culture'. Yet regardless of DfE diktats, the current landscape of social media dominance and post-COVID challenges demands that every school create a climate in which choosing and reading a book is as second nature as watching a TikTok Video.

Bear in mind, however, that this can't happen if the books you have are largely dusty and raggedy. How often is your library stock updated, and are there enough books to serve school numbers? Nor can it happen without a librarian who possesses a range of skills and expertise unmatched by the rest of your admin team. Is your school library led by an experienced and qualified librarian with a passion for YA fiction?

Consider also whether your students can see themselves in your library's selection of fiction and book displays, as well as the books' author photos. Does your range of available literature mirror your school community? Use your borrowing figures to monitor which year groups use the library less and whether, say, girls are reading more than boys.

Try to incorporate regular opportunities into the curriculum for independent and quiet reading for pleasure, be it in form time or during English lessons. If you can, try facilitating talk about books and reading to encourage peer recommendations among students, either informally at break times or formally during library lessons, in tutor time, or part of their English studies.

Efforts should be made to ensure reading for pleasure is celebrated and modelled. This could be done during assemblies, via a reading rewards program, by appointing reading ambassadors, and/or through organising 'buddy projects' that match older, stronger readers with weaker ones.

How aware are parents of the impact that regular reading for pleasure can have on students' attainment and wellbeing? If you need to spread the word, flyers at parents' evenings, posts on your school's social media feeds and reading workshops can all help.

Try taking a 'reading walk' before registration, or during break or lunch, and check how your library space is being used. Are students just hiding from the rain or browsing the shelves? Moreover, do you see any students *actually reading*, or at least clutching books in classrooms and other areas beyond the library and English department?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jenny Hampton (@brightonteacher) is an English teacher, literacy lead and former SLE (literacy)

WHY NOT TRY ... TAX FACTS

Tax Facts is a free, curriculum-linked tax education programme developed by HMRC and initially introduced in 2015, before being updated and relaunched in October 2022. The programme has thus far reached over 200,000 young people, based on downloads of the programme's supporting resources and the number of sessions schools have booked with an HMRC tax ambassador.

Tax Facts 'graduates' benefit from receiving an introduction to tax, how it works, why it's so important and ways in which it can affect different communities across the country. At a time when learning financial literacy and 'real world' life skills at school is seen as increasingly important by pupils, parents and educators alike, Tax Facts has the potential to contribute in a meaningful way to both.

The what, why and who of tax

The programme is designed around delivery to two age brackets. The full Tax Facts programme is aimed at 14- to 17-year-olds, while the separate Junior Tax Facts programme is intended for 8- to 13-year-olds.

The programme as a whole is intended to help young people gain practical knowledge of the world of tax and better understand their own tax responsibilities. Areas specifically covered by the Junior Tax Facts portion include the purpose of tax collection, how tax facilitates public spending and the role performed by HMRC.

Older students meanwhile get to learn more about the nature of the UK tax system, what happens when taxes aren't collected and how tax is typically paid by employees.

HMRC ambassadors

Designed by a team of educational experts, the programme's curriculum-linked activities are particularly well-suited to maths, business studies, citizenship and PSHE lessons and are backed up by a full suite of teacher resources. These include a delivery guide, a classroom presentation, activity sheets for in-class use with appropriate follow-up tasks and links to a series of YouTube videos.

Tax Facts activities can be led by teachers or optionally delivered by visiting HMRC ambassadors, who will lead a 45-minute lesson with time allocated at the end for student Q&As and a careers discussion on what it's like to work for HMRC.

THE TAX FACTS RESOURCES CAN BE DOWNLOADED VIA BIT.LY/TS127-TF; FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO ENQUIRE ABOUT ARRANGING A VISIT FROM AN HMRC AMBASSADOR, EMAIL HMRC.TAXEDUCATION@HMRC.GOV.UK

DO THIS

OBJECTIFY MISBEHAVIOUR

EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

When it's necessary for you to manage misbehaviour, talk about it and refer to it as though it were an object.

Let's look at the following remarks directed at students:

'Why do you always chew gum in my lessons, Jane?'

'Faisal, you are always late!'

Instead, we can try to direct those same comments using a different framing, like this:

"Chewing gum in lessons, Jane, is against our school rules..."

"It's important to always be punctual to your lessons, Faisal..."

If you personalise misbehaviour by attaching it to your students, then you'll increase the chances of them becoming defensive when called out.

But if you can treat the misbehaviour as an object – something the student is engaged in, rather than something indelibly ascribed to them – you can both be more objective, calm and dispassionate when addressing the matter at hand.

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

9%

The percentage by which teacher starting salaries in England are lower than the OECD average – though maximum teacher salaries in England are at least 44% higher

Source: Education at a Glance 2023 report by the OECD

The National Foundation for Educational Research has this month published an extensive report examining the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on schools, based on a survey of families, teachers and senior school leaders.

84% of those senior leaders surveyed reported that the cost-of-living crisis had led to an increase in the proportion of students needing additional support beyond standard Pupil Premium and SEND provision. The report notes that over a quarter of pupils in mainstream schools now require wellbeing and mental health support, and that safeguarding concerns, challenging behaviour and absenteeism have all risen compared to 2022 figures.

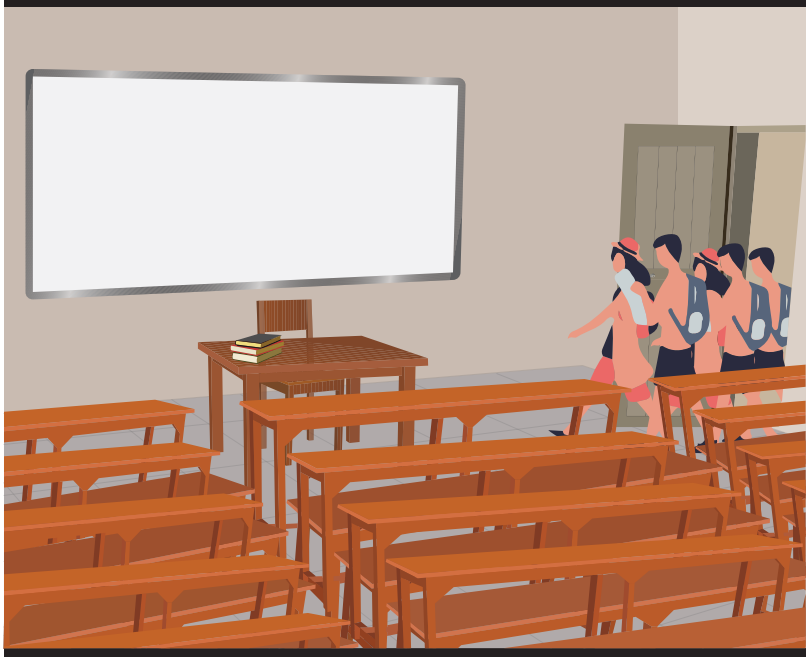
As such, some 90% of schools participating in the survey had expanded the scope of their extracurricular activities and aid provided to families over the past year – the latter including uniforms and other clothes for children. Around 70% of schools are also providing some form of food assistance in the form of subsidised breakfasts and food vouchers, by assisting with food banks and through other measures.

In all, at least 60% of senior leaders reported an increase in the school time and resources they now dedicate to additional provision compared to last year.

The NFER's full cost-of-living research can be accessed via bit.ly/ts127-LL2

YOUR GUIDE TO...

ENTRY TO THE CLASSROOM



Entry to the classroom is one of the most important routines to establish when it comes to creating a safe, calm and focused learning environment. With students entering in an appropriate manner, you'll be able to set the tone, direction and pace of the lesson right off the bat.

Your positioning is one of the key factors to consider when the students arrive. Whether you prefer to stay by the door or position yourself at the front of the classroom, the key thing to concentrate on is controlling the *flow* and *focus* of your learners as they enter.

The ideal scenario

Remaining at the door or threshold will afford you the opportunity to greet students as they arrive and instantly correct any behaviour that indicates they're not ready to learn. Situating yourself inside the classroom at the front as they enter, on the other hand, will make for a less intimidating arrival routine, while still enabling you to effectively monitor the class as they begin to work.

Another aspect of effective entry worth considering is what the students will be expected to do once they enter. The ideal scenario is to have an activity ready and waiting – be it recall practice, a curiosity task or even just a resource for them to read.

One sage piece of advice I was given many years ago was to ensure that any task prepared for the students when they enter is simple, effective and most importantly, *possible for them to complete on their own*, without any teacher support. This will not only help to increase the students' self-efficacy, but also give you time to sort out any final checks and preparations before the lesson gets underway.

If you can get your students to enter the room calmly and get down to business swiftly, you'll be able to get the lesson off on the right foot. Note, this isn't a silver bullet that will prevent any and all forms of troubling behaviour – but it is at least a strong start that will help lay the foundations for future success.

ADAM RICHES IS A TEACHER, EDUCATION CONSULTANT AND WRITER

60%

of children whose fathers read to them several times a week attained a good level of overall achievement in the EYFSP

Source: 'What a difference a dad makes' report published by the University of Leeds

Need to know

Schools with an active Educational Recording Agency licence will want to bookmark the BBC Literary Archive – a new online resource for secondary, further and higher education settings co-developed by the ERA and the national broadcaster.

Free for existing ERA licence holders, the service houses an extensive collection of radio and TV adaptations of literary works spanning a number of decades, alongside a range of documentaries and other forms of literary analysis.

Highlights thus far include Shelagh Delaney's 1971 TV play *A Taste of Honey*, Orson Welles' notorious 1939 radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* and the BBC's celebrated 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation.

GCSE and A Level set texts are certainly well represented, with dramatisations of the likes of *Frankenstein*, *The Great Gatsby* and *An Inspector Calls*. There's ready access to more modern fare too, including the 2020 televised adaptation of Malorie Blackman's *Noughts + Crosses* and the BBC's recent adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy.

The BBC Literary Archive can be found at **era.org.uk/literary-archive**

CLOSE-UP ON...
MICROSOFT CLASSWORK

Microsoft's latest addition to Teams for Education, Classwork, is set to give educators access to a powerful tool that can streamline their lesson planning. Classwork aims to provide an efficient solution for teachers they can use to simplify the tasks of managing assignments, sharing resources and ultimately keeping students engaged.

Resource Organisation

Classwork lets you streamline and consolidate everything from Assignments and OneNote Class Notebook pages, to web links, files, and Teams channels – all in one centralised location, rather than having resources scattered across multiple platforms and applications.

This type of smart integration can ensure your materials remain more easily and readily accessible, enabling teachers and students to effortlessly acquire whatever it is they need.

Modules

In Classwork, a 'module' refers to a distinct organisational unit that educators can manipulate in order to structure and organise their course content.

To create a module using Classwork, users can navigate to their Teams environment and select the 'New Module' option. Once created, modules will remain hidden from student view until they're published, allowing the learning experience to remain carefully controlled. Educators can then edit and customise the modules they've created, according to the needs of their class.

Interactive assignments

When you're ready, it's easy to add supporting resources to your modules. You can simply drag and drop the relevant files straight onto the module, or select the 'Add a resource' option from within the module itself to get started. Many different resource types can be added, including Class Notebook pages, files produced by other teams, assignments saved as PDFs, external links and more besides.

Educators can also use Classwork to produce interactive assignments spanning a range of media – be it videos and collaborative documents, or assorted quizzes and surveys. Educators can then easily attach any accompanying rubrics and guidelines to these – say, to clarify expectations and grading criteria.

The resulting transparency will empower students to take charge of their learning, since they'll now know precisely what they require to be successful.

You can find videos and tutorials to help you keep up to date with Microsoft Classwork on our YouTube channel (search for 'Clouddesignbox'). By using Classwork to its fullest potential, you can create some amazing learning experiences.

DARREN HEMMING IS COO OF THE IT SOLUTIONS PROVIDER CLOUD DESIGN BOX AND A FORMER MFL TEACHER

On the radar *Language hubs*

The government's Language Hubs programme has now officially commenced, following the announcement of 18 schools that will act as 'lead hubs' for high quality MFL teaching practice, which it hopes will improve MFL provision across the country.

The schools chosen include Cardinal Hume Catholic School in the North East, The Priory Academy in the East Midlands, Ada Lovelace CofE High School in London and Keswick School in the North West.

According to Schools Minister Nick Gibb, "Young people who are confident in a second language are at a huge advantage in life. On top of the social and cultural advantages it provides, there are many economic benefits of learning another language.

"That is why I have long called for more pupils to consider studying languages such as German at GCSE, and this programme will crucially equip teachers with the necessary training and knowledge to support pupils looking to do so."

The lead hubs will partner with other schools in their respective regions to improve their languages offer, facilitate more effective KS2 to KS3 transitions and ensure that 14- to 18-year-olds from different backgrounds can study languages through to KS5.

Also of note is the inclusion within the programme of a distinct 'German Promotion Project'. Led by the Goethe-Institut, the project aims to raise the profile of German learning within schools and promote the wider benefits of studying the language.

TRENDING

Our pick of recent resources and launches that teachers may well find useful...

LISTEN IN

The E-ACT MAT has launched a new podcast series, 'Opening Minds Opening Doors' which promises to explore a range of social and topical issues pertinent to students, families and educators. Listeners can look forward to episodes on LGBTQ+ education, women in STEM and knife crime, among other topics.

bit.ly/ts127-LL3

TRADING PLACES

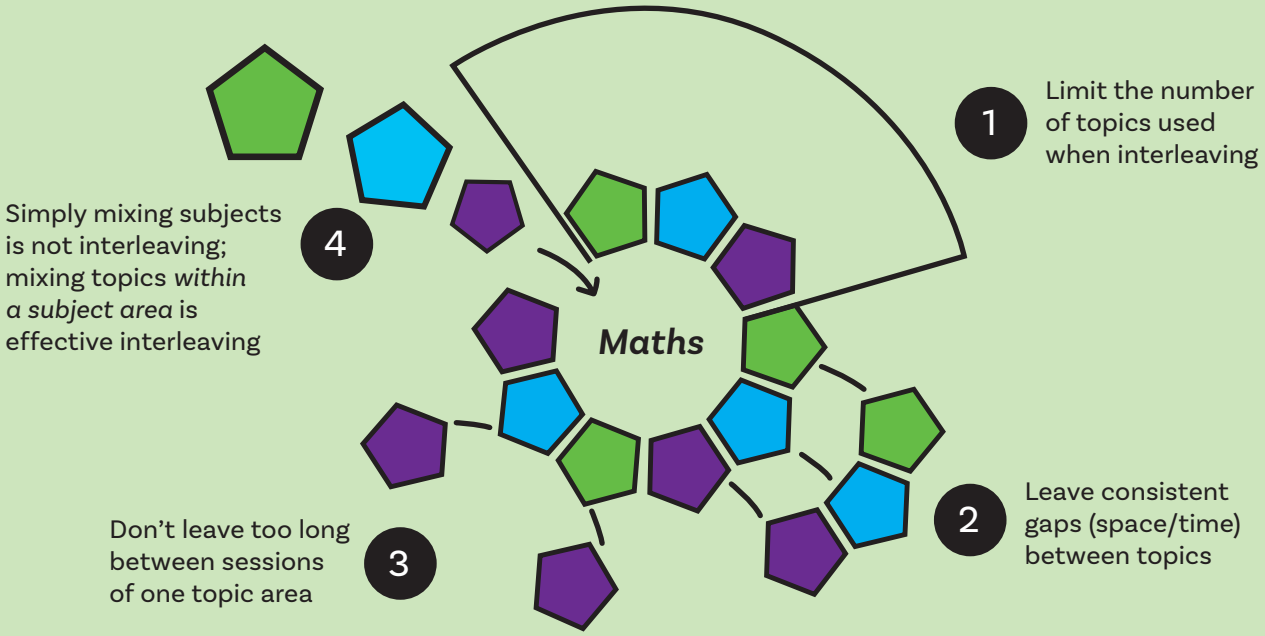
Checkatrade has launched an education initiative aimed at driving interest in learning a trade among Y10 and Y11. The 'Try a Trade' campaign includes an online resource hub for teachers and careers advisors, alongside a suite of student activities promoting the opportunities and earning potential to be had from qualifying as a tradesperson.

bit.ly/ts127-LL4

1 MINUTE CPD

THE 4 PRINCIPLES OF INTERLEAVING

THE CARDINAL RULES WHEN STUDYING MORE THAN ONE TOPIC AT A TIME



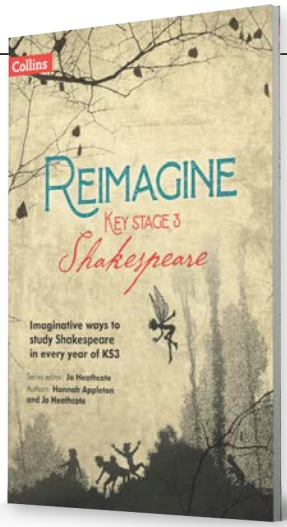
ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at @teachsecondary

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...

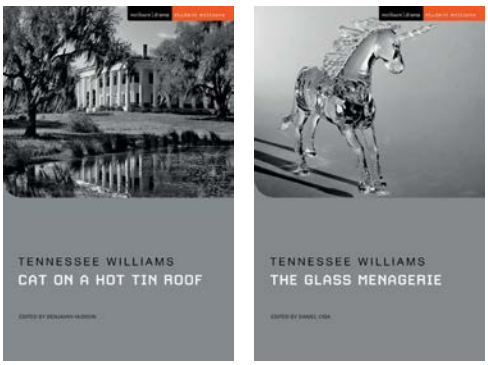
You want to teach Shakespeare's works in detail, in a way that's both inspiring and relatable for KS3 students.

Priced at £100; find out more at collins.co.uk/ReimagineKS3English

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

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

Start as you mean to go on

If you're a fledgling teacher still getting to grips with what the job entails, **John Lawson** would like a word...

My target audience today is the resourceful ECT cohort who have managed to survive the immense challenge of complex studies, teaching practice, interviews and so much more. Welcome to the wonderful, life-changing world of teaching. Allow me to make a few noises that may help you.

First off, be true to yourself. You'll never connect with your students if you adopt a teaching persona based on someone you admire. What fits them superbly may never suit you. Teenagers are like animals – some of them wild, others less so, but all driven by acute sensory perception. They can instantly sense when something is amiss about Miss or Sir, and they're skilled trackers.

If you want to ace their sniff test, stand your ground, maintain eye contact, smile and let them see someone confident, knowledgeable, and passionate about their subject. The more you love to teach, the more your students will love to learn. Great teachers always assume they're teaching great subjects.

Embers of autonomy

Teach as you can, and not as you can't. No two teachers will shape any syllabus in quite the same way; indeed, variety is the spice of classroom life. The way that works for you is always the best way to teach. You must adhere to the aims and objectives of the course – but the rest is your call, which is where the profession's remaining embers of autonomy and agency will be warmest.

Every principal's primary concern about the teachers they oversee will be, '*Can they deliver the goods?*' I once took over a supposedly 'unteachable' bottom set Y11 RE class, and had just two terms to get them through their GCSEs after the school had all but given up on them. This was a 'mission impossible' that called for an unorthodox, even risky approach.

I therefore promised the students that if they let me teach uninterrupted for 20 minutes each day, they could have the other 30 minutes to themselves. I saw this as being 20 quality minutes gained, rather than 30 minutes lost.

Every night I prepared a 10-point handout to teach from. Teenagers can behave and concentrate for 20 minutes, providing the incentives are appealing. Once their free time commenced, the various social groups in the class would play cards, listen to music or quietly chat.

From my point of view, enjoying the craic and being high-fives-friendly was better than risking a bunch of fives. They respected me as a friendly and 'brainy dude', but I was never a mere friend. 12 of my 'disciples' went on to diligently earn a C in RE, and I've often wondered how they explained their sole GCSE to their own children...

Discipline and punishment

Ludwig Wittgenstein's sharpest contribution to education was his conclusion that we cannot accurately read students' minds. This is why it's so important to focus on delivering high quality teaching by avoiding the simple relaying of facts, when raising questions is more engaging.

For example, instead of just asserting '*Racism, sexism, and homophobia are indefensible,*' turn this round by asking them '*How do we **know** that racism, sexism, and homophobia are indefensible?*' The concentration span of teenagers peaks when you let them speak, and they love discovering answers!

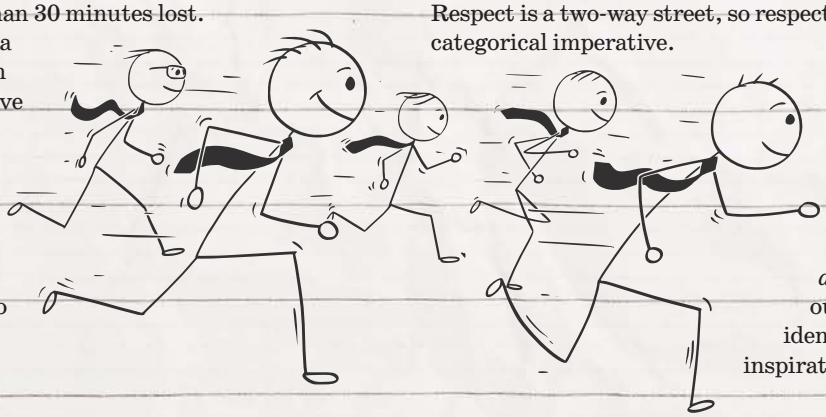
Discern the difference between discipline and punishment as soon as you can, and avoid shouting – it never helps. Effective disciplinary responses to unwanted behaviour are those that educate teenagers out of poor conduct.

Teachers must also model and foster respectful behaviour. Once you've created a healthy, fear-free learning environment, everything else falls into place. Most detentions are pointless unless they truly educate the detained.

Mutual respect

Don't sweat the small stuff. New teachers invariably face challenges to their authority, but when you encounter behaviour that doesn't prevent the majority from learning, let it pass. However, you must never let any form of abuse or aggression slide. The more you tolerate, the more you'll have to tolerate in future.

Prioritise disciplinary actions over the curriculum, and calmly address situations as privately as possible. Lost time can be quickly made up once student behaviour improves. Respect is a two-way street, so respecting your students is a categorical imperative.



Finally, read Parker J Palmer's brilliant polemic, *The Courage to Teach*, and if you haven't already, watch *Freedom Writers*, *Dead Poets Society* and *Stand and Deliver* – a set of outstanding works that all identify and celebrate inspirational teaching.

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