

CONFIDENCE OR COMPETENCE?

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GREAT SCHOOL LEADER

A better way to tackle summer learning loss



IS YOUR ACCESS PLAN FIT FOR PURPOSE?

HOW COMMUNITY COLLABORATION BOOSTS FUNDS

PROTECTING NEW TEACHERS WITH MENTORS



Strategies to deal with toxic staff

Dr Lee Elliot Major
BREAKING BARRIERS TO SOCIAL MOBILITY

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From the editor



I hope everyone had a restful summer? I know it can be very difficult to switch off and take a rest, especially as the work never really stops. We look forward to a new school year with hope. Hope that it can't be as challenging as the last 18 months. We are not free of the pandemic, the Delta variant has been playing havoc around the world, but with a huge amount of people being vaccinated then maybe disruption will be minimal. We can only hope that is the case and a new variant doesn't pop up to put a spanner in the works. We will also have to see what the Government has planned for the coming year. What funds may or may not be available. What new rules or lifting of restrictions will impact on everyday school life. I believe that if anyone thinks that we are just going to reset and go back to the way things were before Covid-19 then they have a rude awakening coming. There will be a lot of fallout still to deal with.

Despite returning to some sense of normality, the challenges that Covid-19 has thrown up will be with us for quite a while. There will be pupils struggling to return to the classroom, as well as the issue of lost learning. Not only due to the pandemic but also the summer holidays. Katy Pinchess, headteacher of Bentley C of E Primary School in Surrey, has adopted a new strategy and will be using technology to help identify and address summer learning loss in the coming academic year. Carrying the torch for increased learning is Ann Johnson, deputy headteacher at The Prince of Wales Primary School in Dorset. She outlines her six steps schools can take to reignite positive attitudes to learning in the classroom. School finances have also taken a big hit over the course of the pandemic and John Jolly, CEO of Parentkind, the largest network of PTA fundraisers in the UK, estimated that PTAs' 2020 losses amounted to £75 million. Maybe our hardworking PTAs may be able to get out and organise some of their great events once again.

Enjoy the issue,

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September 2021

Our experts this issue



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From the makers
of **Teach Primary**

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A big challenge for education

Dr Lee Elliot Major OBE, renowned author and the UK's first Professor of Social Mobility, talks about his career

What are you working on at the moment?

I've just released a new book – *The Good Parent Educator*. We summarised hundreds of studies and it's all about evidence informed tips for parents – what are the things you could do that could make a real difference. It's personal because I lived on my own from age 15 and it was friends and family members that helped me get back on track. Social mobility is a personal issue, and it's taken a lifetime for me to get to this point and I wanted to give back and share some of my own personal experiences as a parent, but also make it evidence informed.

How did you start your career?

I always loved writing as much as I love numbers. But at school, because I had an ability for maths, the teachers urged me to go into the sciences. And, to be honest, it was the path of least resistance. So, I ended up doing physics. I applied to Cambridge and I got an offer but I had some personal issues and didn't go. But, I'm very proud to have gone to the University of Sheffield, spending a lovely six years there gaining a BSc in physics and PhD in theoretical physics. When I finished my PhD, I had one of these moments where you reflect on where you are. And I had this urge to write about

science and education. And that's why I applied to do a Masters in Science Communication at Imperial College, London. Essentially science journalism.

I realised that the one thing I knew a lot about was education. I've been in education most of my life at that point and I ended up doing a placement on the Times Education Supplement. And I just caught the journalism bug. But, at the same time there was always a bit of me that still wanted to do data as well. I was an unusual journalist at the time, the fact that I could do an Excel spreadsheet used to sort of astonish people. I suppose I was on the serious end of journalism. I used to do quite big analytical pieces. I did that for a number of years, and ended up on *The Guardian*.

What made you leave journalism?

I interviewed people which then subsequently led to new jobs. I interviewed the director of the Wellcome Trust and, eventually, they were looking for a director of policy and so I did that between 2002-4. I then went back to journalism and joined the Times Higher Education Supplement, where I interviewed Sir Peter Lampl, who was the founder of The Sutton Trust, which was this social mobility charity, a foundation dedicated to the one issue I was obsessed by. I pestered him for a couple of years and eventually he relented, and I became director of research there. I was with them for 12 years and eventually became chief executive. I had an amazing time and learned huge amounts.

What came next?

I reached the age of 50 and I wanted to go back to the core of what I've always wanted to do, which is research and writing around social mobility. I went to the University of Exeter and got the post as the first Professor of Social Mobility in the UK. I'm loving it, I'm back, in many ways, to where I started. It's an academic position but, as a professor of practice, it's not just publishing journal articles and getting grants. It's very important to me to try and have a real-world impact. So, I work with schools a lot or I'm talking to government advisors, civil servants or ministers, trying to encourage the

government to think about how to improve the prospects for disadvantaged young people. I might be talking to major employers, and I'm sometimes writing newspaper articles and opinion pieces.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected primary education and social mobility?

One of my research projects is specifically looking at this. We've documented the learning loss suffered on average over the last year of the pandemic. We estimate that the majority of children have missed over half of face-to-face school days, so they haven't been in the classroom. But then we looked at how much learning actually happened when they were at home. We now think that a third of learning was lost over that year. It's the poorest pupils that have missed out the most. Partly, it's because they're not attending school as much as they're more privileged counterparts. Also, when they're at home they are less likely to have the internet and don't have the study space. The pandemic has definitely exacerbated existing educational inequalities. I'm involved in lots of projects looking at how to address these inequalities. Whatever the government does in its recovery plan, it's got to be targeted at those schools serving the most challenged communities. But, I'm also working with schools on what they can do as well. I hold sessions on how to improve classroom teaching and feedback, because that's one of the biggest things that can help kids. But also, some interesting projects around how to engage with parents before children even go to school. Can a school work with those parents so they can guide their practice? Which comes back to my book, by the way, how do you give advice to parents so that they can sit down and read with their kids before they actually get to primary school?

Has Covid-19 changed the parent/school dynamic?

I think schools got to know parents more, in general, because of what happened. And I think parents have tried to be teachers and many of them didn't realise just how big a job it is. As we come out of the pandemic, we have to be careful that we're not overloading





schools with too much expectation about catch-up and attainment. Research suggests that 70 per cent of outcomes are due to outside school factors and 30 per cent within school. So, sometimes, when you hear the government talk, it's almost like school is responsible for 100 per cent of outcome. So how much can schools do is a question we have to ask?

What are your thoughts on extending the school day?

Any extended school day should probably focus on what we call extracurricular activities, which I think are core. Studies show that things like sport and arts are as important as getting the grades. They teach you how to get on with people, how to advocate things, how to be resilient and they're good for mental health.

Your new book is aimed at parents but will teachers find it interesting?

I suspect it will be useful to teachers as well. I was a trustee of the Education Endowment Foundation, that produced lots of evidence of

“I reached the age of 50 and I wanted to go back to the core of what I’ve always wanted to do, which is research and writing around social mobility.”

what works in big research reports. What I’ve done with this book is actually trying, in a very accessible way, to summarise them into key points - what do we know about learning tree? What do we know about effective feedback in the classroom, or what do we know about setting children, grouping them by ability? So, I suspect lots of teachers will find this really useful as well, because it’s like a pocket guide really- the five things you

need to know. What I do stress is that this is not a book for parents to become teachers.

One thing I hope the book does is it shows them that teaching, actually, is a highly complex skill, leave it to the professionals is one of my points. But you can engage with teachers and ask good questions about school.

Going forward what challenges are facing schools now?

I think teachers have got a huge challenge over the next couple of years. They’re going to have children who are behind where they would have been normally. I don’t think the Government quite understand the scale of that. I think it’s going to take a couple of years. We should fund schools, particularly more for things like pupil premium. Also, there should be a recognition that schools can’t solve all society’s ills. I worry, again, that all these things will be landed on schools, and we need to think about how we address things like internet connections. There should be a debate about what are the basics that every child should have?

CAREER TIMELINE

1993
Awarded PhD
in theoretical
physics

1999
Joined The
Guardian
newspaper as
education journalist

2006
Joined Sutton Trust,
going on to be its
first CEO

2010
Commissioned and
co-authored the
Sutton Trust/EEF
teaching and
learning toolkit

2018
Published first
book, ‘Social
Mobility and
Its Enemies’

2019
Appointed by
Exeter University as
the country’s first
Professor of Social
Mobility and
received OBE

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School Improvement

CONNECT WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Gary Spracklen explains the benefits, and his experiences, of outdoor provision

“As headteacher, it’s been important for me to break down barriers and lead on maintaining and growing the use of our outdoor provision.”

During the COVID-19 lockdown, I was continuously grateful for where I live. Not because I live in some mansion with an indoor cinema, games room or library. Not because my property has fast broadband connectivity, energy-efficient lighting or the very latest in ergonomic furniture but because I have a simple garden.

An outdoor space I can call my own and during lockdown it’s where my family spent the vast majority of their time.

Outdoor space is important you see, even more so of course in times when our movement is restricted.

I felt for those families without access to outside space

during lockdown but also linked that thinking to children in schools without appropriate outdoor learning environments.

BLESSED

The need for children to develop naturally as part of nature and be considered ‘connected’ to their environment in a holistic way is not new but can be traced back to Rousseau (1770), who said ‘put children in natural surroundings and let them develop...the mind should be left undisturbed till its faculties have developed. Nature wants children to be children before they are men.’ Pestalozzi (1774) advocated that we learn from nature ‘it is nature that teaches...just be silent and listen.’ Froebel (early 20th century) did not want us to just observe plants and animals but to follow everything through to the source and see how everything connects.

At the school where I am headteacher, The Prince of Wales School in Dorchester, Dorset, we are fortunate to be blessed with outdoor space. Having lots of outdoor space is only as useful though as you make it and we work hard as a school to ensure our provision has the most impact on learning for our whole-school community. Indeed, as a philosophy, we see our outdoor learning spaces as just as important as the internal learning spaces which we too have spent time developing in recent years. The two must sit hand-in-hand to sustain learning and deliver impact.

Going back to Froebel, he spent



many of his formative years in the garden. He saw that the whole curriculum could be taught in the garden but, also, that nature provided the strongest evidence possible for the 'unity of all things'. Even the word 'kindergarten' combines the child with the garden.

OBSERVATIONS

He believed that we are all part of nature itself and one of his first recollections was when one of his grammar school masters made him realise that the tree, though complete in itself, is part of a larger whole. It takes from the soil and the air and gives back to both. One of his observations on children was '...the contemplation of a stone or plant often led to profound outbursts upon the universe'.

The story of The Prince of Wales School goes back to the early 1990s. At that time there was a need for more first school places in Dorchester (for children aged from four to nine), so it was decided to build a completely new school on a site next door to a small special school on Maiden Castle Road, a mile away from the Iron Age Hillfort. The special school was for pupils with physical disabilities, and it was so small that it was struggling to survive. It's chair of Governors, felt that the children were not getting their entitlement to a full curriculum, and closure seemed inevitable. But in a moment of vision the decision was taken to integrate all the pupils from the special school into the new school.

Twenty-five years later, we have a thriving, fully inclusive and community-focused school with an integrated unit for children with physical disabilities. Our purpose-built school has a particularly impressive design and is spacious and practical. It is set in its own extensive grounds which currently include play fields, playground, environmental studies area, orchard and outdoor teaching areas.

SHOCKING

As headteacher, it's been important for me to break down barriers and lead on maintaining and growing the use of our outdoor provision. A Guardian article published in March 2016, revealed that three-quarters of UK children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates. Young children are growing up in a world that is changing more rapidly than in any other time in history – technologically, environmentally, socially, politically and culturally. My challenge is to inspire them to care, preserve and develop this world in the future - to connect them with nature and provide a relevance that goes way beyond any artificial experience generated by technology.

Gary Spracklen is Headteacher at The Prince of Wales School, Dorchester



ADDRESSING THE TOLL OF THE PANDEMIC

Sally Finch believes mindfulness areas give children a place to reflect after lockdown

When we welcomed the children back through the school gates after lockdown, they walked in with an entirely new set of needs. We were met with pupils struggling to cope with their feelings of both excitement and anxiety. These intense feelings caused a significant amount of overwhelm, which of course culminated in a range of behavioural changes.

We are very lucky at St Margaret's C of E Academy that we don't have many behavioural issues, but it was clear to myself and my staff that instances of bad behaviour were much more frequent after the children returned from lockdown.

SOCIAL SKILLS

There is a myriad of reasons the issues could be attributed to. Some children had been very engaged during lockdown and completed a lot of work; others had not done much schoolwork at all and had been hard to communicate with. It was clear to see that there were not only gaps in their learning, but also that some children were struggling with their social skills.

Despite many friendships flourishing as the children returned to school, we noticed that some were more hesitant. Children who were previously chatty, friendly, and confident were now reluctant to interact, put their hand up or answer a direct question. Some even found it hard to make eye contact.

Before Covid-19, many would have been able to share with us that they felt sad or worried and explain the circumstances, but since the national lockdowns there are times when they seem unable to articulate how they are feeling. It may be that some of the children have overheard

conversations about parents losing their jobs, money worries and relatives being ill in this timeframe. All of which is likely to have taken a toll on them, even if it is unknowingly.

I knew we needed to do something to help them with this transition. I had been looking into the benefits of wellbeing areas for some time and decided that now was the right time to implement these spaces throughout the school.

COMMUNITY

My team agreed that our school needed specific environments where children could go to feel safe, happy, and have their own space. Over the Easter break, staff worked tirelessly in their own time to develop mindful, wellbeing spaces across the school. Our school community even pitched in by providing plants and turning their expert hands to tending the mindfulness garden.

We made use of the space we had available to us as best as possible - both indoors and outdoors. Outdoors we created a quiet and comfortable reading area, and a brightly coloured mindfulness space, with lots of natural elements. In our classrooms we now have wellbeing baskets which have stress balls, blankets, books, sensory toys and Playdoh.

The children love the outside space, where they can tend the plants and vegetables and feed the birds. Being outside can be really calming for them and already we have noticed the behavioural blips have evened out. It is clear to us that the children are making use of the areas when they aren't feeling great, even if they are unsure why.

Sally Finch, Vine Schools Trust, executive headteacher, St Margaret's C of E Academy

"The children love the outside space, where they can tend the plants and vegetables and feed the birds."

What skills have been impacted?

Marc Pitman discusses the effect of the pandemic on young children's handwriting

Handwriting is a developmental process that requires the simultaneous engagement of a range of capabilities, including physical strength, visual perception and both gross and fine motor skills. In pre-pandemic times, children gradually grasp each of the separate features of fluent handwriting with a teacher at their side, but a series of lockdowns meant most teaching was delivered digitally and often lacked a structured timetable. As a result, the core skills that create good handwriting habits were under threat.

In order to explore this further, we undertook a survey of primary teachers in June 2021 to reveal how the pandemic has affected handwriting. Through a series of questions, we uncovered which of the underlying handwriting skills have been most impacted by school disruption, with the aim of sharing them with the teaching community to ensure handwriting is part of the catch-up plan.

Deprivation

Firstly, we asked teachers whether disruption to their school during the pandemic has had a negative effect on pupils' good writing habits.

Unsurprisingly, 83 per cent of teachers agreed with this statement. This was most pronounced in primary schools with the highest levels of deprivation, which echoes wider research by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) that found pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds had been hardest hit in maths and reading.

We then asked how much time is being spent focused on handwriting since their school fully reopened, compared with other areas of teaching, almost half of respondents said they had maintained the same level of focus on handwriting as before the pandemic, with a further eight per cent saying they had deprioritised it. The remaining 41 per cent of teachers had increased the amount of time on handwriting.

While every school's recovery plan will be different, it was interesting to see the similarities that emerged when we asked which areas of handwriting most worried teachers. Writing stamina was the most



“Opportunities for motor mapping letters and joins during the pandemic have been reduced.”

common area highlighted, with 72 per cent of Key Stage 2 teachers raising it as a concern. Maintaining stamina will have been difficult with the increased time spent learning online, as children use different muscles and have less opportunities to write for extended periods of time.

Writing speed was also flagged as an area of concern by Key Stage 2 teachers. If a child writes too quickly, letters can lose their shape and size, then spacing can become inconsistent. Therefore, learning to write with speed while ensuring that it remains legible can be a hard skill to master. After all, handwriting is a physical process and it is often issues relating to the physical aspects of writing that are the cause of handwriting problems. Using a system of reminders called the ‘P checks’ (posture, pencil grip, paper position and pressure) can ensure children maintain good writing habits and develop the correct speed. Warm-up writing tasks are a good way to prepare children for handwriting sessions and build stamina.

Guidance

Letter size and position was the area most frequently highlighted by Reception and Key Stage 1 teachers. Without guidance to help them keep letters and numbers consistent, children may have fallen into bad habits. Opportunities for motor mapping letters and joins during the pandemic have been reduced. As a result, children have not been able to develop their motor memory in the same way, and the underdevelopment of fine motor skills will have impacted correct letter formations as well as the size and placement of letters.

When produced with ease, good handwriting frees up mental bandwidth for other activities, which is vital given the wider catch-up happening in schools currently. But if a child is unable to put their ideas on paper, we are limiting their ability to share, and this will have a knock-on effect across their work.

Marc Pitman, Head of Marketing, Schofield & Sims, a leading publisher of books for schools, parents and tutors.

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Reading role models

James Schillemore explains why it is vital that you're a reading role model if you want to reach reluctant readers

With the recent lockdowns, technology has accelerated, and the draw of a good book is waning. Parents reach for their phones in many households and children reach for their tablets rather than a good book.

The recent EEF report showed that disadvantaged pupils were up to seven months behind peers due to Covid-19, highlighting that post lockdown it's never been more critical to reach reluctant readers. To foster a love of reading, children need to enjoy it and now that pupils are back in the classroom, how can we engage those reluctant readers.

The gift of loving to read is one of the greatest gifts you can give a pupil. But

“Whether it's a comic, magazine, or sports pages, it counts if a child is reading.”

getting every child in the class to the 'enjoying reading' stage is not always easy. But at our school, we've put some simple initiatives in place to help.

KNOWING THEIR PASSION

In the same way, when we are teaching topics like maths, you know as a teacher that your success rates will be higher if pupils are engaged in something they are passionate about, and reading is no different. Take time to discover each child's interests. What are they passionate about? It could be that finding reading materials about Minecraft, for example, which will create interest and enjoyment for a hard-to-reach pupil. Help them find suitable reading material about these subjects; capturing their interest is the first step to ensuring reading becomes a joy.

ROLE MODELS

In our class, we take time to read, and that means me too. It's about making reading a priority, and no matter how busy my day is, we will all take the time to read. The

children enjoy getting lost in the pages of their book. Then we come back together to discuss what we have been reading.

GETTING PARENTS ON BOARD

Covid-19 stopped us sending reading diaries home, so we now use MarvellousMe reading log on parents' mobile phones to engage parents in their child's reading at home. I get some great insight data in a spreadsheet, no more wading through reading logbooks. I can see how many times a child has read and what they are reading, and parents love it as they can complete the log in a few seconds and tick that job is done. It's also keeping parents in the loop with what counts as reading; it doesn't always mean sitting down with a novel, so here are my tips.

- **Find their passion:** Whether it's a computer game, an animal or a sport, this is how you will 'hook' them on reading.
- **Variety matters:** Forget about results for a minute; let pupils choose what reading materials interest them. Magazines, sports pages, or novels, it all counts.
- **Review and recommend:** Talk about books in class, review books and get the children to recommend books to their peers.
- **Involve parents:** Get a reading log that is easy for parents to complete to see the value in enjoying reading.

RESULTS DON'T MATTER

Of course, they do, but when trying to get pupils to enjoy reading, all reading counts – you need to forget about results for a minute. Whether it's a comic, magazine, or sports pages, it counts if a child is reading. Help children prepare for days out, researching on the internet perhaps and making notes of what they want to see at an attraction.

It's great to get back in the classroom in early September with children enthusiastic about reading and what they've read over the summer.



James Schillemore is the Lower Phase Leader and English Lead at Stamshaw Junior School, Portsmouth, Hampshire



Building Learning Powers to boost positivity

Ann Johnson gives her six steps schools can take to reignite positive attitudes to learning in the classroom

Learning is the heart of school life, but embedding learning beyond the school gates can be challenging. The Prince of Wales School is trying to change that, bringing parents firmly into the learning fold to help reignite positive learning. By getting parents more involved in what happens in the classroom, it supports the building of the children's learning powers to ensure that when pupils leave primary school, they are lifelong learners with a thirst for knowledge.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Now we are back in the classroom, reigniting positive attitudes to learning is one of the easiest things we can do for our pupils. But, the challenge is sometimes taking this positivity beyond the school gates.

How, then, can we foster this positivity and Building Learning Powers (BLP) and work with parents in learning environments beyond the four classroom walls as much as possible?

The school wants to live and breathe BLP. As well as educating staff and children on its principles, practical challenges include embedding the dispositions of Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reciprocity and Reflectiveness (4 Rs), and their common language throughout the school, and helping teachers to be consistent in their lessons and consistent with each other.

We also want to involve everyone in the programme, especially parents, who play a vital role in formulating their children's habits.

BRINGING LEARNING POWERS TO LIFE

We created four wonderful BLP characters with the children to represent the learning skills: Resilient Tortoise, Resourceful Spider, Reflective Monkey and Reciprocal Bee. Doing this makes them more child-friendly and gives them a personality.

Each term, we focus on one animal, and in the summer term will consolidate all four. Besides discussing each animal's character trait in lessons and assemblies, we made

them into soft toys and hid them around the school. When found, the animal will be hidden again, each time reinforcing the qualities of that learning power.

We also have posters in each classroom and all around the school, emphasising the language for learning. For example, the Reflective Monkey posters show hints like 'I notice how other people do things and 'I know when to work with others and when to work by myself'.

We also use MarvellousMe to praise children and to engage parents in their children's achievements. The children love being awarded MarvellousMe badges for their hard work and success, each time knowing their parents are being told the great news.

It was easy to tailor MarvellousMe to our programme, and we created four exciting animal badges. We ask teachers to use BLP terminology when explaining why each badge is awarded, seizing the opportunity to deepen the child's understanding and bring parents into our learning language.

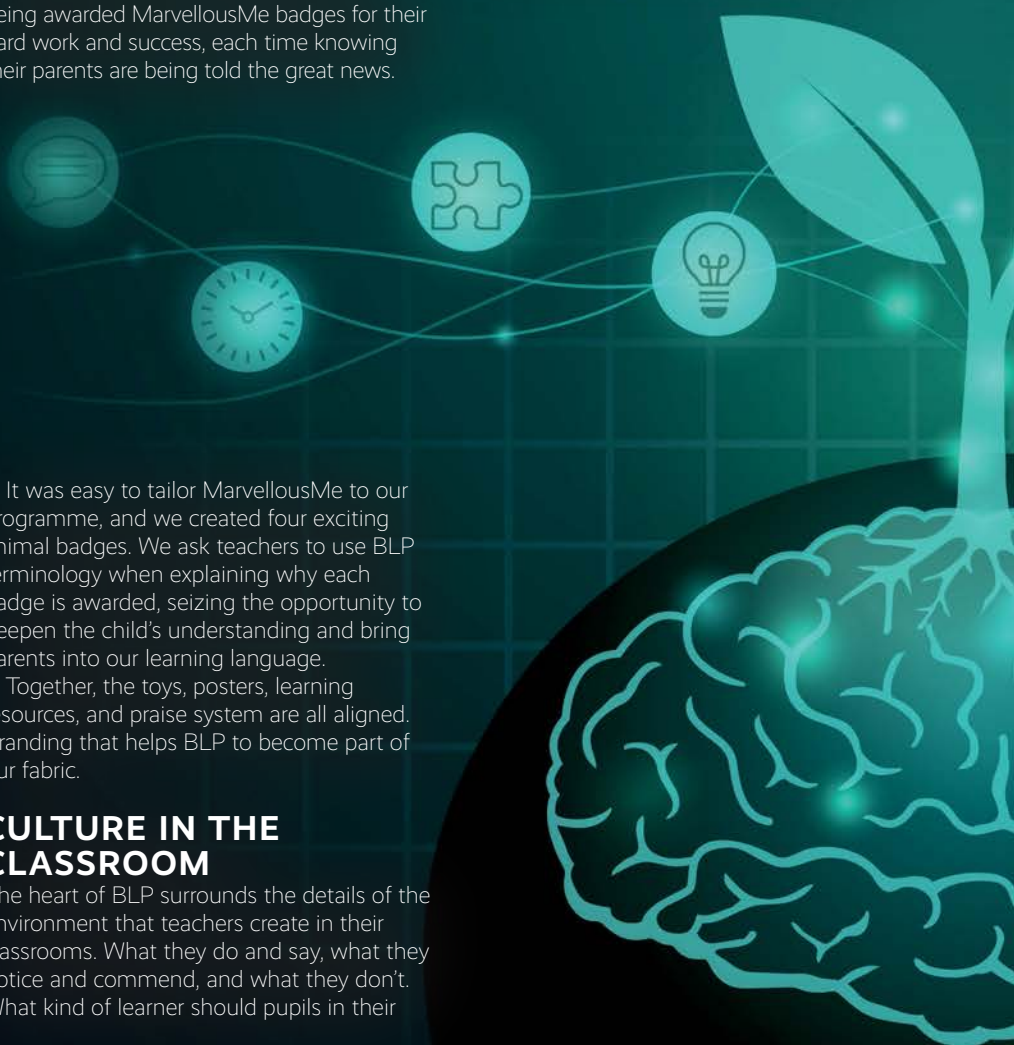
Together, the toys, posters, learning resources, and praise system are all aligned. Branding that helps BLP to become part of our fabric.

CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

The heart of BLP surrounds the details of the environment that teachers create in their classrooms. What they do and say, what they notice and commend, and what they don't. What kind of learner should pupils in their

class strive to be. What matters is how teachers design and present activities so that pupils get an excellent all-around mental workout over the course of a term or a year. All the learning bits of their brains are being stretched and strengthened, one by one, and all together.

Instilling the BLP powers takes time and dedication. It's not a quick fix. It's about culture change, nurturing all the habits and practices that convey the school's beliefs and values. But, there are some quick ways



“All the learning bits of their brains are being stretched and strengthened, one by one, and all together.”

to get started, and here are my top six steps to reignite positive learning attitudes in the classroom:

1. Consistency: Building the BLP learning skills demands focus, structure, routine and consistency. The school has a strong plan and a dedicated BLP champion, monitors delivery through class drop-ins, and reviews best practice in staff meetings.

2. Involve everyone, especially parents: The challenge for any school is truly engaging parents, specifically in their children's learning. We provide information about Building Learning Powers on our

website and newsletters and speak about it at parent consultations. To create a positive classroom, clear communication on their level is a must. Looking at how pupils connect, perhaps using humour, technology or other unusual strategies to engage them.

3. Insight: Look at the information you collect and make it easy for staff to be consistent in their praise and spot any children who may need extra encouragement. These details can also help all members of the teaching team to follow guidelines and work together.

4. Make it easy: For both teachers to send messages and rewards and for parents to find out about the success. This day and age it

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Develop a strong plan and appoint a dedicated BLP champion.**
- **Design and present activities so that pupils get an excellent all-around mental workout.**
- **The heart of BLP surrounds the details of the environment that teachers create in their classrooms.**
- **Connect with parents via an app to keep them engaged**
- **Building the BLP learning skills demands focus, structure, routine and consistency.**
- **Embed the dispositions of Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reciprocity and Reflectiveness and their common language throughout the school.**

needs to be via an app. To achieve consistency, it needs to be easy, quick and effective. At our school, we use MarvellousMe to help us as we can tailor the rewards to meet our own school values, and we can give parents positive news about their children's progress and create positive conversations around the school day.

5. Celebrate success: To achieve a positive learning environment, success should be rewarded and shared and celebrating their achievements as they are happening.

6. ...and finally, smile: But, mostly, at our school, every day starts with a smile. We follow these six steps to accelerate the impact of Building Learning Powers to fulfil our vision that children leave the school with a sense of belonging to a tightly knit community, with the confidence and skills to make decisions, self-evaluate, make connections and become lifelong learners.



Ann Johnson, deputy headteacher at The Prince of Wales Primary School in Dorset.

EXPLORING A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Sue Hodgkinson explains the benefits of Forest School to pupils

Wellbeing in education, especially in the Early Years classroom, has never been more important – especially for children attending an inner-city school. In the Early Years, the outdoor classroom is an integral part of the learning experience that children are offered on a daily basis, but Forest School takes that experience one step further. Forest School provides children with life experiences that instil a sense of wellbeing.

Wavertree Church of England School is one of the oldest primary schools in Liverpool and we have recently celebrated educating the children of Wavertree for over 150 years. We are a typical inner-city school, in the heart of a diverse community. The school is surrounded by a mixture of beautiful Victorian housing and back-to-back terraces and we can be found just off the busy main street that is Wavertree High Street.

Wavertree had always been interested in Forest School, but we didn't really know how to start. At the beginning of this academic year, we were fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to work with the Mersey Forest Nature Friendly School Programme.

Grow Wellbeing, our Forest School leaders, set up a Forest School area within the school grounds, as well as planting trees

around the school perimeter to create a small woodland that the children will eventually be able to explore. With the purchase of a fire pit, a parachute canopy and some safety gloves, we were ready to start on this exciting new venture.

WILDLIFE

Grow came and led weekly sessions with the children, while developing the Forest School area. Our children developed a real ownership of the area as they learned how to care for the environment and improve it to encourage wildlife through activities such as building a bug hotel.

At the beginning of the six-week programme, we had 15 children that, other than our outdoor classroom, had very little experience of learning outdoors. A lot of the children do not even have a back garden, so this was a completely new experience for some.

Our Forest School leaders, Duane and Laura, were very knowledgeable about what was required in order to keep the children safe and were able to link activities to curriculum objectives. Through careful planning, all of the Prime areas of learning

and some of the Specific areas were addressed during the sessions.

Both gross and fine motor control were developed through many different activities, including den building, building a bug house, whittling, threading, weaving, sawing and moving along an obstacle course. Children grew in confidence as they developed the skills required to complete all tasks; they became more proficient using tools which, in turn, had an impact on their fine motor control for writing.

The opportunities for language development were endless. Forest School provided a perfect opportunity for children to develop their communication skills through the introduction of new words. Children who would not normally speak opened up in this non-threatening environment, to express their



“Wavertree’s Forest School has allowed our children to experience a world that is far different from that of home.”

enthusiasm and love of the activities. We have seen an enormous improvement in speech and language development since Forest School started, especially with a selective mute child and those who had a poor vocabulary. Listening skills also improved by having to follow instructions and tuning in to the natural sounds, which had an impact on phonics, enabling children to tune in to letter sounds in words.

CONFIDENCE

It is obvious to us all how our children have grown in confidence through their Forest School experience. Some, who would not talk or participate in activities at the beginning of the six weeks, are now confident talking and fully engage in activities, asking questions to aid their understanding. We even had one of our children deliver the safety talk at the beginning of the session! Children felt confident handling many different tools, including saws and potato peelers; they felt safe around the fire and demonstrated an understanding about how to look after the natural environment. Some children also formed close attachments with our Forest School leaders. There were lots of opportunities for team work through den building and creating pieces of artwork using natural materials. The children also worked collaboratively to build an

obstacle course, which is now used by the whole school.

The Forest School experience was so beneficial to the wellbeing of our Early

Years children, that we rolled out the

programme to Year 3.

Again, for many of these children, the experience of working outdoors was new. They were able to develop their physical skills, by making shelters, learning to use hand tools to whittle, tying knots and moving along obstacle courses. They had opportunities to develop their creative skills, using nature to produce art, making stick men and designing jewellery.

Communication skills improved too. They listened carefully, and vocabulary improved through

learning about nature and developing new skills. Children who would not normally contribute verbally in class, started to participate in group discussions and would verbalise their opinions and feelings. Learning about team work brought home the need to communicate effectively when working together.

VULNERABLE

During the pandemic, the Forest School classroom proved a valuable resource for children of all ages. While the school was a hub for key worker and vulnerable children, the Forest School was used on a weekly basis to offer opportunities to explore nature, art and crafts, working with natural materials – as well as providing a safe place where children could talk. Many of them observed that they could hear the birds due to reduced traffic noise, and for one of our children, this was a new experience.

Our Forest School area continues to evolve on a termly basis, with the children developing our Bug Bed and Breakfast into a Bug Five Star Hotel. They have planted mosses and wild grasses, specific flowers to attract butterflies and bees and have used natural materials to create a cozy home for woodlice, slugs, snails and spiders. The children also plan to create a willow structure that will provide some shade in the summer or shelter from the rain in the winter.

The Forest School area has provided the whole school with an environment in which children can thrive. This unique learning environment has been used by all year groups to make learning real and experience nature and the natural environment first hand. Learning, surrounded by nature, is a privilege, and Forest School has given the children experiences that they will treasure forever – from feeling a slug as it crawls across their hand, to sitting in the rain, around a campfire toasting marshmallows!

WONDERFUL

Wavertree’s Forest School has allowed our children to experience a world that is far different from that of home. They have been allowed to build a den and to dig holes in the ground; to look at and learn how to care for the mini beasts in and around the Forest School area and to use tools that they would not normally use and to make wonderful things out of natural materials. This has all been possible in a wonderful outdoor environment, whatever the weather, in the knowledge that it is OK to get our hands dirty! They have immersed themselves in a

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Grow Wellbeing delivers forest school sessions in primary and nursery schools across Wirral, Liverpool, Runcorn and Chester, and for Mersey Forest as part of Natural England’s Nature Friendly Schools programme. Founder Duane Chong says “aside from addressing all areas of the curriculum, forest schools develop confidence, self-esteem, resilience, personal, social and emotional development.” To get started, he recommends:

- **Just get started – nature connection is the most important thing.** Forest School enhances it, but you can start with planting – grow things in a raised bed or planter, even if you don’t have a green space or field.
- **Create a habitat pile on one of the raised beds for bug hunting – it’s a great introduction to the world of forest school.**
- **Spending time outdoors is most important – use your space as an outdoor classroom doing geography, maths or English.**
- **Get in touch with organisations like us, or freelancers, if you want to take it a step further.** Teachers may find it helpful to speak to the local authority Eco schools officer or School Improvement team.
- **Make sure you have the support of the management team – headteachers need to drive forest school project if they’re keen, and really get behind it to create real opportunities for children.**

Grow Wellbeing has been supported by its member of Kindred, an initiative in the Liverpool City Region aimed at increasing the impact of organisations that create social value but struggle to attract conventional investment.

completely different world, learning life skills that, without Grow Wellbeing and their expertise, we would not have been able to provide. It has been the amazing opportunity for our children, and we hope to build on the skills that they have learned in the years ahead.



Sue Hodgkinson, early years foundation stage manager at Wavertree Church of England School, Liverpool

SUPERHEROES WANTED!

This September, as part of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, join our Mini Superhero Challenge and help us in our fight against the injustice of childhood cancer!

The Children with Cancer UK Mini Superhero Challenge is a completely flexible fundraiser based around the number 12; the average number of children diagnosed with cancer every day in the UK.

Fundraising ideas include walking 12 miles (or laps of your school field), doing 12 chores for 12 weeks or maybe even developing your own Superhero Circuits with 12 different physical activities at each station.

Sign up online at superhero.childrenwithcancer.org.uk or contact us at fundraising@childrenwithcancer.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 298405. Inaugurated by Diana, Princess of Wales. EDU19AD

For every child raising £12, they'll receive an extra special Children with Cancer UK Mini Superhero fabric badge as a thank you for their amazing efforts.



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10 How many reflex interior angles are there altogether?

A 6

B 12

C 16

D 18

E 24



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EDUCATING TO SAVE THE PLANET

Martyn Soulsby warms up the next generation to address climate change

At a time when the European Space Agency (ESA) informed us that the world's largest iceberg has broken off in Antarctica, we are reminded of the ever-present impact of climate change.

Rachel Cookson (geography, Eco School Co-ordinator and Year 3 teacher) with the support of Sally Jenkinson (Year 4 teacher) and myself, at North Lakes School in Cumbria, have worked with staff and pupils to understand climate change while working towards the Eco School award status.

As NASA explains, 'the current warming trend is of particular significance because most of it is extremely likely (>95 per cent probability) to be the result of human activity since the mid-20th century and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented over millennia.'

Thankfully the majority of people care about the preservation of their environment. However, for many teachers the thought of tackling this topic in the classroom can be complex and intimidating.

MISGUIDED

We have all met people who doubt the impact of climate change, so it's important to ensure that our teachers and pupils understand the issues and correct answers to these misguided comments. For example: "This is the coldest winter we've had in years, so much for global warming." Of course, these doubters are confusing weather fluctuations, which occur every day, with climate, which refers to long term trends; the overall trend is indisputably a warming one.

At North Lakes School we felt that by educating our pupils we hope that they will become a part of a positive movement to ignite change.

As part of our schools' commitment to climate change education, we started working towards achieving our 'Green Flag' award and become an ECO School as part of a post lockdown recovery project.

Because there are so many different interpretations of climate change, we wanted our teachers and pupils to use fully researched, vetted and trusted learning content.



“At North Lakes School we felt that by educating our pupils we hope that they will become a part of a positive movement to ignite change.”

To help achieve this we started using ClickView's curriculum aligned video-based Climate Change learning content. The clips cover a broad range of sustainability topics clarifying exactly what climate change is, and making the pupils think twice about waste and recycling during isolation. The programme presents expert opinions, statistics and historical references presenting two sides of the story, and ultimately asks us, how worried should we be and what can, or should we do to avert climate change?

But we're not just educating our pupils into the facts, we're also teaching them how to get 'hands on' and play an active part in address the change. The video Climate Changes series has provided us with plenty of ideas.

THE ECO SCHOOL PROJECT

Our Eco School project is running across the school with each 'bubble' within the school exploring different elements of sustainability and climate change.

One Eco Project bubble in the school watched a video on the impact of plastics

and then adopted one of the ideas provided, using plastic bottles to make planters on the school fence. Another bubble decided on a number of initiatives suggested such as creating re-usable shopping bags. They brought in cotton bags in bulk and every student created their own design as gifts for their parents and grandparents

We have a group planting wild-flowers, to encourage the bee population, while another bubble teamed up with the National Farmers Union. We want to raise our pupils' awareness and encourage each individual to apply the learned concepts of sustainability to every aspect of their daily lives.

The pupils are not only engaged in their learning but are also encouraged to think selflessly about their own impact on the environment. Hopefully, this next generation will be the catalyst for positive change. The impact we're seeing to date is certainly proving to be vital and a part of our whole school journey.

Martyn Soulsby, computing lead, Year 5 class teacher and leadership team at North Lakes School in Cumbria

TEACHING PUPILS TO LOVE READING

Danni Cooke gives her expert insights on how to make children confident readers

I was delighted to be made Lead of the Ilsham English Hub in 2018, because I'm passionate about working together with colleagues to create fluent and confident readers, as well as to inspire pupils to love reading, as I'm confident everyone can.

Funded by the Department for Education, the 34 English Hubs across England were selected for their expertise in teaching reading and to support schools in their surrounding area. Our three main priorities as a hub are: to share expertise in ensuring all pupils make speedy progress in phonics and reading; to promote a love of reading; and to develop pupils' understanding and use of spoken language.

Our English Hub is located in Torquay and works with schools throughout a lot of the South West region. We support schools to help get all children reading regardless of their background, needs or abilities. Our work has been especially pertinent over this strange year and we have helped schools to get and keep their children reading despite the massive challenges the pandemic has thrown at them.

We provide different layers of support to the region, from intensively supporting partner schools by giving them specialist support from one of the English Hub Literacy Specialists to inviting new schools to find out the work of the hub through showcase events to disseminating CPD to schools throughout the region. This year we have adapted our delivery and taken the majority of the programme and our CPD online, which has also meant we have a greater reach in particular to those schools that are in a tricky location and are often very isolated.

We provide free CPD to schools around our main hub aims and have run a number of masterclasses each half term, delving deeper into an aspect of

one of our main Hub aims such as 'The stages of learning to read' or 'Focusing on the lowest 20 per cent'. These masterclasses have been run by me and they look at current research and give participants practical take away ideas. These classes help schools consider their next steps and refine and develop their practice and whole school expertise of reading. We also offer schools personalised audits to look more closely at their provision and what they should be doing, as well as providing them with funding to make these next steps a reality and ensure reading is at the heart of school life.

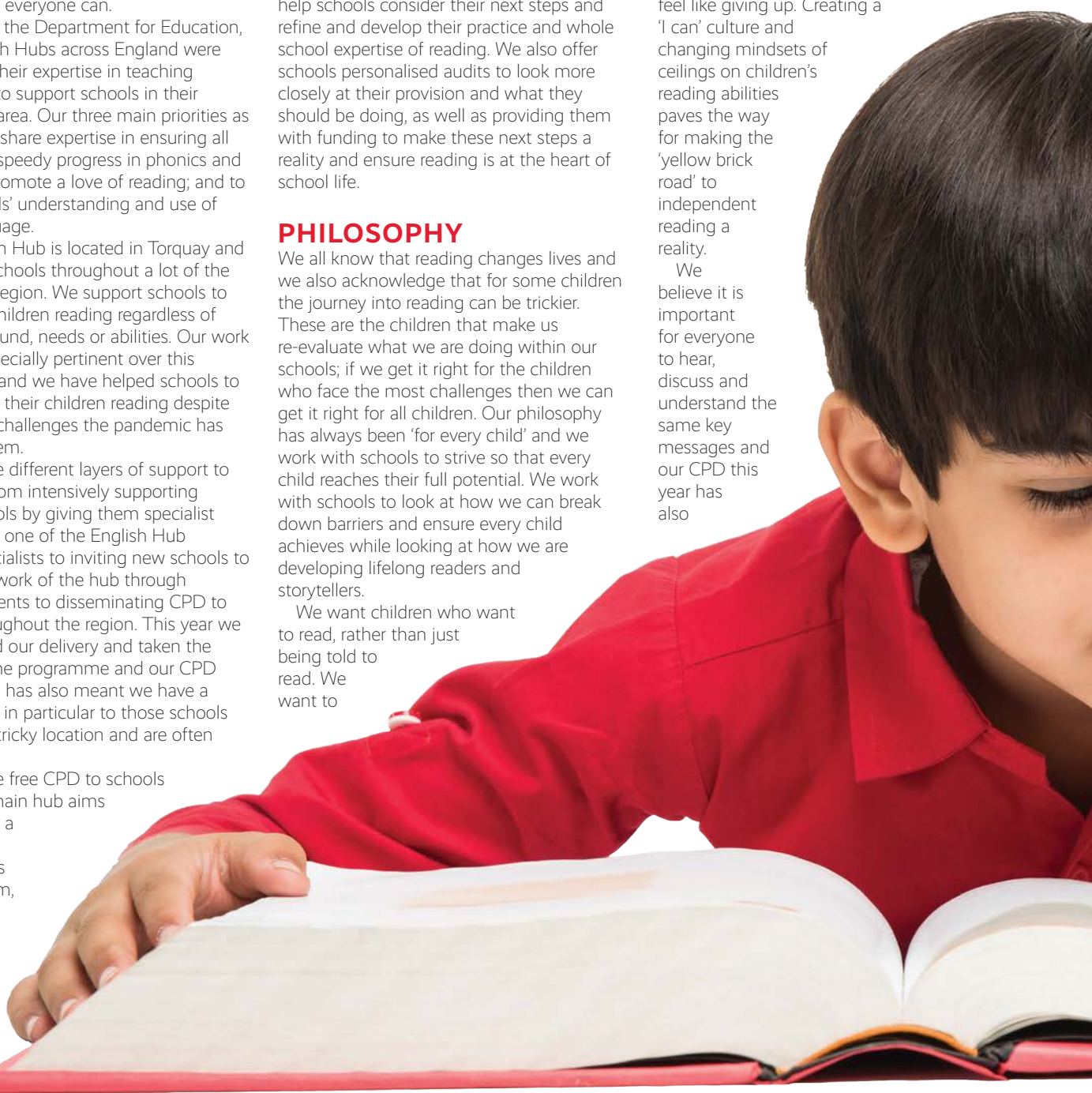
PHILOSOPHY

We all know that reading changes lives and we also acknowledge that for some children the journey into reading can be trickier. These are the children that make us re-evaluate what we are doing within our schools; if we get it right for the children who face the most challenges then we can get it right for all children. Our philosophy has always been 'for every child' and we work with schools to strive so that every child reaches their full potential. We work with schools to look at how we can break down barriers and ensure every child achieves while looking at how we are developing lifelong readers and storytellers.

We want children who want to read, rather than just being told to read. We want to

create lifelong and everyday readers, who cultivate a rich diet of stories, poetry, songs, and information texts. The material we give children to read themselves is matched to their needs to empower them to know they can rather than to struggle and feel like giving up. Creating a 'I can' culture and changing mindsets of ceilings on children's reading abilities paves the way for making the 'yellow brick road' to independent reading a reality.

We believe it is important for everyone to hear, discuss and understand the same key messages and our CPD this year has also



“We support schools to help get all children reading regardless of their background, needs or abilities.”

included external speakers to disseminate key research and strategies on how we are all singing from that same hymn sheet and how together we are building teams of experts within schools rather than the reliance of a single staff member being the font of all knowledge. The free external CPD has included experts in their fields such as James Clements, Professor Teresa Cremin, Michael Rosen and Gill Jones from Ofsted.

Throughout the year we also run cluster groups of support for reading leaders as well as a research-based Teachers as Readers Group in association with the Open University and UKLA which meet six times over the year.

IMPACT

We have refined our CPD each half-term according to the needs of the schools that we support, and we have had hundreds of participants attend our different events. We

firmly believe in impact rather than just a dollop of CPD so we know that we will make a difference. We have built strong relationships with schools and they know they can come to us for support, questions and to problem solve together.

The English Hubs' work shows that learning to read does not need to be hard. Whatever validated programme you follow underneath it all is the fundamentals of phonics and the key foundations that all children must achieve in order to succeed. Understanding aspects such as the stages of blending to read and how to develop children's reading fluency are important to ensure there isn't cognitive overload.

The wellbeing of staff is vital too. This year has been difficult for schools and knowing they have support every step on the journey gives them reassurance and confidence. Funding for schools has enabled many schools to make changes they haven't been able to before.

Research has shown us that learning to read is absolutely essential to ensure that we open the world to our children. Without the ability to read independently then this amazing curriculum we are developing is not accessible to our children. Right from an early age, children want to be able to do things themselves, we need to consider how do we know the process of learning to read, the journey and the steps needed and how do we ensure that children make age-appropriate progress through this no matter what obstacles are thrown in their way.

CHAMPION

I truly believe it is imperative we get this right, to

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If you haven't already, get in touch with your local English Hub, start the relationship so that together every school in the country can work together to open these barriers.
- Put staff training and CPD at the heart of improving reading in schools, purchase matched resources and look at what books staff have to support the reading journey that are carefully matched to every child's need.
- Schools need to make their staff, children, parents and other stakeholders aware of their yellow brick road, their route to teaching every child to read so together we ensure no child is left behind. Every child has their own next systematic step that is getting closer to the reading gate where the world of opportunities is available.

change life chances and, as Rita Pierson says, every child deserves a champion, the one person who will never give up on them. We are in this vocation for a reason.

We can make a difference and the English Hubs initiative is a fantastic opportunity for schools up and down the country to work together to ensure that every child has the best possible future and reading is the key to this.

The South West has shown this year we will not let the pandemic be the reason our children do not have a successful future. Reading is the start of that future and this year is not a single story of loss and underachievement. It is a story of hope, of passion, determination, and teamwork and of hubs and schools working together for a brighter future for every child.

Once we get those children reading, we are going to keep them reading and they are going to love reading!



Danni Cooke is the Ilsham English Hub Lead and a Specialist Leader of Education in Early Years at the Learning Academy Partnership

BRIDGING THE SCIENCE GAP

Ben Rogers explains how to teach primary science so that it's effective for later learning

By focusing on teaching scientific knowledge and working collaboratively, Paradigm Trust is changing the way science is learnt, resulting in pupils achieving improved results and greater engagement with the subject in all their schools.

To ensure science is taught effectively there are several challenges which need to be overcome. The first, and perhaps biggest of these, is the way the teaching of science is implemented at the different stages. It is noticeable in the UK education system that science is often taught in a completely different manner in primary schools than in secondary schools. This disconnect causes issues as the skills and knowledge embedded at primary are not the ones valued at secondary school, so time needs to be spent at the start of Year 7 teaching pupils what they need to know to learn effectively at Key Stage 3 onwards.

Science often has less classroom time than other core subjects, so maximising this precious time is essential. However, many primary schools across the country use an enquiry-based learning approach, despite a growing number of studies showing this method to be ineffective in its current form. It generally fails because significant scientific knowledge needs to be in place before the enquiry begins so children can ask the correct questions.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, learning something new is hard; it takes all your attention. Teachers are highly skilled at breaking down a challenging concept into small chunks, building a complete understanding. When learners try to focus on more than one new idea simultaneously, their working memories are

overloaded. Enquiry becomes effective only when the necessary concepts and skills are largely mastered. Due to lack of time, or lack of understanding, children usually aren't primed with this scientific knowledge and so do not have sufficient comprehension of what they are looking for to get the most out of this approach.

SPECIALIST

Exacerbating the challenges many UK primary schools face is the lack of specialist science teachers working at that stage. While there are some teachers with science qualifications who work in primary schools, the majority choose to work in secondary schools. Only 40 per cent of science leads have a Science A-level. The one or two days that teacher training spends on science come nowhere near to filling this gap.

When children reach secondary school, the focus often shifts almost exclusively to teaching to pass the GCSE, rather than exploring the full uses of science, so students can be left with a narrow comprehension of the subject that is more weighted towards succeeding in an exam than having a good

understanding of science.

Several longitudinal studies demonstrate teaching scientific concepts in primary, including children in Reception, results in more rapid progress sustained over their whole school careers. In the Swiss MINT longitudinal study and Novak 2005 from the



“Only 40 per cent of science leads have a Science A-level.”

US, pupils in grades 1 to 2 (Years 2 to 4 in England) were given 24 short science interventions spread over two years. Unsurprisingly, the intervention children knew more immediately at the end of the intervention. But the authors continued to track the students until they completed their school careers at 18. The assessment data showed the intervention pupils made greater science progress over the entire period. Another study shows pupils' fundamental ideas about chemistry evolve rapidly between six and 12 and only slowly afterwards, despite intensive instruction (Horton 2007). So initial content is important to later development. It seems likely choosing foundational topics, rather than leaving it to teacher choice, will optimise this effect.

TECHNIQUES

Paradigm Trust is working to overcome these traditional challenges and raise student attainment levels in science using a number of different strategies. The first is ensuring schools are working from a knowledge-rich science curriculum, using consistent, evidenced-based teaching methods. This curriculum is written by the Trust and externally reviewed by a qualified external subject specialist to ensure continuity across the board, and teachers use techniques which are proven to deliver the material effectively. Subject leads at every year group are tasked with ensuring all teachers have the required science knowledge, and meet once a week and share resources they have developed.

In subject groups, a large proportion of time is spent discussing how to prepare children better for the move from primary to secondary school, and how to make science effective from Nursery to Year 9. Much of this work is led by Ben Rogers who is on the Education Committee at the Institute of Physics, and the

editing panel for the Association of Science Education journal. He is also part of the Ofsted Science advisory group, with a particular focus on primary schools.

As its schools had to adapt to online learning during recent periods of lockdown, Paradigm built further subject knowledge through banks of online resources, including external training materials covering subject and pedagogy knowledge plus challenges to common misconceptions, eg. you can't teach forces to pupils who don't have a base level of understanding. This has been incredibly effective and will continue as a practice.

DIVERSE

Finally, the Trust receives feedback on its practice and ensures that teachers have the teaching and subject knowledge required through termly online testing, which tracks how they engage with the learning.

Teaching science at primary school so it is effective for later learning is not just about the subject matter but how it is presented. By Year 6 pupils may not have made a firm decision about their career, but they will have ruled out subjects they don't relate to. Much of science history relates back to achievements by white men and with only 21.2 per cent of Year 6 children reaching the expected standard in science there is a danger we create life-long barriers if we don't address diversity and inclusion through the curriculum.

Paradigm's curriculum has been designed to reflect its pupils' backgrounds, ensuring they see themselves in it. It has built in representation from Arabic cultures around Astrology and the History of Medicine, and positively discriminates by adding narratives to make teaching more relevant to pupils. It is currently working on a project with the University of Northumbria called NUSTEM, which focuses on 'usualisation' of diverse role models to encourage primary children to consider science careers. It builds a short career selection in every lesson, providing teachers with resources featuring a diverse selection of role models.

Since Paradigm began working this way more students have been successful in science GCSE, and more high grades are being achieved. The number of students

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Ensure teachers have access to appropriate subject knowledge, particularly through years 1-3.
- Create a digital bank of best practice so teachers have appropriate subject knowledge at every age group.
- Consider diversity and inclusion in your curriculum.
- Regularly assess teachers' understanding of subject knowledge and pedagogy, capturing feedback to improve every year group.
- Teach and check pupils understand scientific concepts before attempting enquiry-based learning. Finding the 'sweet-spot' between direct teacher instruction and enquiry makes the most effective use of classroom time.
- You are filling high achieving children's long-term memory with what they need to learn effectively at the next level. Check they have learnt it.
- Read 'Putting students on the path to learning: The case for fully guided instruction' by Sweller, Clarke and Kirschner (2012). It challenges us to think through our position on enquiry and to jettison practices which are not effective, regardless of how loved they are.

choosing to study a science subject at further education level has increased, and at every level of schooling it is noticeable children are achieving better results and becoming more engaged in the subject.

Having an effective understanding of science is incredibly important for the individual and society. Children are entitled to know how the world works – without this knowledge their lives aren't as rich. A good understanding of science will allow them as adults to make informed decisions on important matters, such as voting, wearing a mask or vaccination, as has been seen recently. And it opens doors to numerous careers in a huge range of fields. For all these reasons Paradigm Trust will continue to work and innovate to ensure it gives its pupils the best science education possible.



Ben Rogers, Director of Curriculum and Pedagogy at Paradigm Trust

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Cast your vote for a Pupil Parliament

Monique Harlin explains how democracy can help students find their voice and build their self-esteem

The devastating impact of the pandemic on children across the country, and indeed the world, has been widely reported. Over the last 18 months, our future generation is experiencing more stress and anxiety than ever, regressing in basic skills like reading and writing and being isolated from friends and family with all sense of normality removed from their lives. This has had a huge impact on their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

At Wainscott Primary School, in Medway, we are committed to continuing to provide a range of exciting and developmental opportunities for our pupils. In fact, at times like this, we think it is more important than ever to find ways to offer exciting, engaging and new experiences for our pupils to support their development and wellbeing.

At the start of the academic year, we launched a Pupil Parliament to give pupils the chance to take on responsibility and develop their communication and leadership skills. The Parliament would also provide the additional benefit of engaging pupils in politics and democracy. Like many schools, we attempted student councils in the past, but there was something about a Pupil Parliament that felt different, and we knew we had an exciting opportunity on our hands.

“We also created school cabinets that focused on the key areas raised by the Pupil Parliament.”

We started the process with an election, similar to the national system. Pupils interested in taking part, campaigned and spoke in assembly about why they would make a good minister and what they hoped to achieve for the school. Each class then had a ballot and voted for who they would like to represent their class, or ‘constituency’, and the elected ministers



from each class formed our parliament.

Once our ministers were in place, they took part in an exciting training programme through the UK Parliament scheme where they enjoyed hearing from civil servants about what it is like to work for the government and learning about the work of the Prime Minister and our local MP. Inspired by what they had learnt, one of our pupils wrote to our local MP, Kelly Tolhurst, to ask for a safer school crossing.

We also created school cabinets that focused on the key areas raised by the Pupil Parliament. These were the Environment Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Cabinet, Curriculum Cabinet and Sports Cabinet. Through these cabinets, our pupil ministers took on real responsibility for making change in school.

EMPOWERED

For example, they created our new uniform policy with very little support from teachers. They took the process seriously, researching other schools’ policies and talking to peers about their uniforms, before deciding to align the policy with the school value of inclusivity. Throughout the process, they learned about what it means to be part of a democracy and listen to each other’s ideas and come to an agreement that the majority were happy with. They also developed skills in

resilience by working through the feedback from the senior leadership team and gained confidence talking to adults. Pupils felt empowered by the responsibility and when the final policy was put in place, their sense of ownership meant our ministers enforce the policy themselves and now appreciate how much work goes into making these decisions.

CONFIDENCE

Through working together in a democracy, pupils have felt their ideas have been listened to and valued and they have responded effectively to taking on more responsibility in the school community. This sense of achievement has uplifted their self-esteem and we are seeing the benefits of improved confidence across the board, both in schoolwork and classroom contributions. Our pupils are now more engaged, and in turn, attainment is improving. Implementing this miniature democracy has been transformative for our pupils and we would highly recommend it to other schools looking to support pupils with low self-esteem.

Monique Harlin, headteacher at Wainscott Primary School, part of The Primary First Trust

Is it time for a change?

Anna Gregory asks whether the pandemic gives the opportunity to press the reset button when it comes to curriculum design?

Rather than summer holiday preparation, many school and Multi Academy Trust (MAT) leaders across the country turned their attention to reviewing and adapting their curriculum planning. But completing this process against the backdrop of the pandemic, and the ever-changing guidance from the DfE and Ofsted, presented many challenges.

As well as focusing on trying to fill any educational gaps, and ensuring children continue to access a broad and balanced curriculum, leaders had to also consider how to prepare children for a world full of unknowns and jobs that don't yet exist. This isn't meant to sound dramatic, or to make the task in hand any more overwhelming; it's simply that keeping this in mind will put you in a good position to consider how your school might future-proof children's skill sets in a much wider context than just the classroom.

The first step is to ensure the planning and delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that each and every child has the opportunity to discover and develop their own talents and interests.

DON'T RE-INVENT THE WHEEL

A sensible starting point would be to see what you already have in place, looking at it with fresh eyes, and identify how you can tweak that. By examining your current provision, you'll be able to identify any gaps and then decide how you can quickly fill those.

At this point, it can be really useful to canvas your team, parents and children to find out what elements of your curriculum they think are important or interesting. Drawing on teachers' expertise and the views of children and their families will help you understand your school's priorities.

These open conversations are a good way to secure 'buy-in' right from the outset and ensure that your curriculum intent is fit-for-purpose.

Making decisions about the curriculum in partnership with other stakeholders ensures that your curriculum meets the needs of your context and facilitates the unlocking of new knowledge, talents, enthusiasm and experiences for students.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE WHY

Another valuable exercise is to ask yourself what the purpose of your curriculum plan is and how it links with your school's vision. This exercise is imperative when considering your curriculum intent.

Are you confident that all your staff know and agree on what the school's educational philosophy is and what makes it unique to your setting? Is there consensus across subject areas on the skills children need to master and the impression you want your school to leave on its pupils? Is the purpose of your curriculum clearly articulated and embedded across school? Finding answers to these types of questions will inform the decisions you make about what to teach, when and why.

As you gather information from your teaching team, it's important to remember that each subject is unique and the curriculum needs to reflect this. Having a whole-school understanding of what makes a subject distinct is key to the success of a curriculum overhaul. This will make it easier for teachers to choose lesson resources and content that supports the school's vision for learning.

If the teaching of each subject is delivered in a way that explicitly echoes the school's values and purpose, then you will be in a good position to see greater alignment across the whole curriculum.

ENSURING A SEQUENTIAL CURRICULUM

In primary schools, where children typically change teachers each year, it's essential that a child's experience of the curriculum is logical, sequential and coherent as they move through each stage of their education.

The sequence in which subject matter is taught is fundamentally important so factor this into curriculum planning. Bear in mind, of course, that some content

may have been missed due to the pandemic. With well-considered sequencing of skills, knowledge and understanding, children are more readily able to make the connections between different subject areas, thus maximising their chances of committing learning to long-term memory.

This coherent, sequential approach benefits teachers too. It means that when they welcome their new class at the start of term, they have clarity on what the children have been taught and will be confident about how they can build on this.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS

Another factor to consider is the additional support you may need to put in place if changes to the curriculum mean teachers are required to teach a subject or year group in which they have little experience. You'll need to pay particular attention to early career teachers who may have had limited opportunity to conduct face-to-face teaching and may have missed certain elements of curriculum training. There's a great opportunity, when designing your curriculum, to look at not just the school's



“Another valuable exercise is to ask yourself what the purpose of your curriculum plan is and how it links with your school’s vision.”

strengths but also the areas for development as well, so that teachers who are stepping into new territory can be given opportunities for professional development. Moreover, you need to consider the continued professional development of all staff against the backdrop of the pandemic and changes to governmental policy so that nobody is left behind.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

There are many unknowns for the academic year ahead, but the pandemic has shown the incredible resilience and adaptability of leaders and teachers across all sectors of education.

There has never been a better time to review your curriculum delivery to ensure it is meeting all your staff’s and pupils’ needs and, if not, make some adjustments.

The importance of taking a fresh look at curriculum design was highlighted by Chris Belli, executive director for secondary education at the White Horse Foundation, in a recent white paper on Making the Impossible Possible - A Covid-19 exit strategy for primary schools. “We need to re-evaluate the curriculum in a post pandemic world,” he

said. “We can’t go back to business as usual, we need to explore how a curriculum can adapt to an individual when they have lost learning, but must continue learning according to age-related expectations.”

When you are reviewing your curriculum, ask yourself whether it genuinely facilitates the creation of historians, geographers or artists, or is it more focused on learners being able to remember required facts and information alone? Taking this honest and in-depth look at your school’s curriculum will help to reveal whether it is as broad, balanced and rigorous as it needs to be.

DEEP BREATH FOR DEEP DIVES

As a former senior leader and teacher, I know that even the thought of an Ofsted inspection can be enough to keep you wide awake at night, particularly when inspectors are spending time with not only the leadership team but classroom teachers, subject leaders and pupils too. Curriculum is under the microscope like never before and whilst this focus is welcome, it can have huge implications across all members of a school community.

Use the information you recorded during the initial consultation with class teachers and leaders as part of an inspection to demonstrate the school’s strategy in designing or making changes to the curriculum. This will make it easier to clearly communicate the objectives and intent of your model, how you will implement it and how you will assess the impact.

Knowing what knowledge and skills children need in each subject area, whether they have learnt what they were supposed to and what progress they have made will be essential for demonstrating positive outcomes in an inspection. It will also help you to review the impact of curriculum changes, so consider how you will gather this information early on. You may need to introduce a new workflow or piece of software to ensure the process is as simple and effective as possible. You will also need to ensure that you factor in time for leaders to analyse and respond to any assessment data.

PLANNING YOUR CURRICULUM

- Make sure your school has a clear vision, purpose and rationale that is communicated and embedded.
- Don’t feel the need to revamp your curriculum from scratch.
- Collaborate with staff, parents and pupils on curriculum design.
- Look at both strengths and areas for development.
- Ensure support is in place where appropriate but particularly for early career teachers.
- Check your curriculum is logical, sequential and coherent, taking into account learning that may have been missed.
- Design a broad, balanced and rich curriculum to nurture budding scientists, geographers, historians, musicians and artists etc.
- Communicate any changes to the curriculum to staff and explain the rationale.
- Review whether teachers need CPD and/or training in certain subject areas to ensure quality-first teaching.
- Ensure your curriculum is inspiring, challenging and purposeful for all.

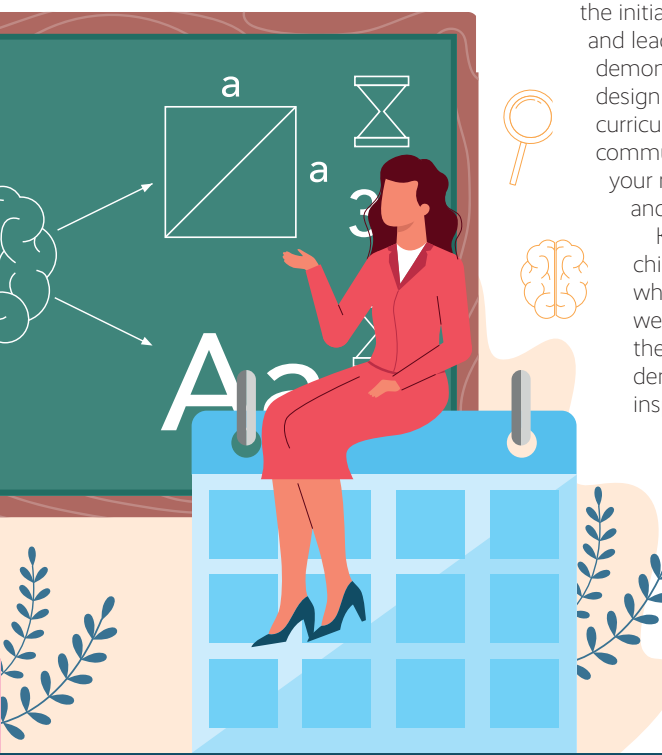
THE FUTURE

Take time to consider (or, indeed, reconsider) what it is you need pupils to learn, and whether your curriculum is rich, ambitious, coherent and well-sequenced. Carrying out this process in collaboration with your wider team will ensure you are starting off on the front foot.

Although the pandemic is, and will continue to be, a black cloud on the education horizon, for now at least, it does offer schools the opportunity to reflect and ask whether the learning experience could be even better for children both now and in the future.



Anna Gregory, former school leader and director of curriculum at Juniper Education



WAYS TO SUPPORT SEND PUPILS

Natalie Browne asks how can we help SEND children to cope with their mental health during the pandemic?

We have all made huge adjustments during the upheaval of Covid-19, from adjusting to home learning and distance teaching through to limiting social contact with family and friends. For young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), this period of disruption to routines and environments has been particularly challenging.

A government State of the Nation report assessing young people's wellbeing throughout the national lockdown found that the parents of children and young people with SEN generally reported that their children had more difficulties with emotions, behaviour and concentration during this period, compared with non-SEN children. The charity Family Fund also found that 83 per cent of families surveyed felt the pandemic had negatively affected their disabled or critically ill child's mental health.

As we grapple with the ongoing uncertainties around Covid-19, families with SEND children continue to face heightened anxiety and stress, especially as some children with physical and mental health challenges are continuing to learn remotely rather than return to school. This can all directly impact the student's ability to learn and thrive in all aspects of life.

Educating children about good mental health practice is always important, but it is

even more pressing given the current coronavirus pandemic. It is essential that we support SEND children to engage with their mental health and equip them with the emotional skills to communicate their feelings during this challenging period.



“Tapping into something which the child enjoys and planning a mental wellbeing session around that hobby or passion can be highly effective.”

LET'S TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

At HES, our Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller support team work closely with children struggling with behavioural issues or facing exclusion. We provide a range of tailored support services to help pupils connect with their learning and develop positive mental health and wellbeing habits.

After a long period of school closures and remote learning it is normal for children to be feeling more anxious, worried, or upset than usual with the return to school. Helping children to understand that it is okay to feel worried while encouraging them to talk about how they are feeling, is a necessary first step to positive mental health engagement. Children with SEND often struggle to express their emotions, which makes it even more important to find strategies which work for the individual child. Tapping into something which the child enjoys and planning a mental wellbeing session around that hobby or passion can be highly effective. For example, if the student loves trains or super heroes, we might develop a personalised lesson using trains to help the child talk about their feelings. One-to-one sessions using resources such as puppets also help to create a safe space for children to open up and communicate how they are feeling. During Covid-19, we moved our support sessions online to ensure children can continue to access the therapy they need remotely.

Schools might also explore training programmes for staff members to develop their mental health support skills, so that they are in a better position to help students cope with the 'new normal'. For example, at HES we partnered with mental health charity, Place2Be, to support local primary school teachers become 'mental health champions'.

The training sessions provided practical advice and resources for teachers, for example learning about Attachment Theory in children and how teachers can create a safe haven in the classroom, helping children to develop their communication and resilience skills. By encouraging children to regularly check in on their emotional wellbeing from an early age, we can build the foundations for positive mental health behaviours later on in life.

GIVE CHILDREN TIME TO READJUST

Children with SEND typically thrive on structure and school provides a safe space with familiar, trusted adults and clear expectations and boundaries. With the pandemic turning these routines upside down, many of the families we support have reported a rise in behavioural issues at home, as well as the development of new challenging behaviours in their child which they had not seen before.

Making time for adjustment is key; whether the child is continuing to learn at home or returning to school, they will likely need more time and prompts than usual to complete tasks and get to grips with their learning. Being as clear and transparent as possible about routine changes and maintaining contact with familiar faces such as teachers where possible, will also help children to mentally navigate this new situation. If the child is struggling with aggression or behavioural issues, finding an alternative outlet for expression, such as movement breaks, and using positive reward systems can help them think differently about negative situations and develop a positive mindset.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH THE TRANSITION

Many children will be looking to making the transition from primary to secondary school in September. This can be a daunting experience for children under normal circumstances, let alone during a pandemic. Due to the constantly changing situation with Covid-19 in schools, many children have not had the transition support they would normally receive going from Year 6 up to secondary level. At HES we have had to get creative with supporting students remotely with the transition process led by the Attendance and Behaviour Service. For example, we created a series of fun and interactive videos talking about the changes which children will experience moving to Year 7, such as their new timetable and what their uniform will look like, using visual prompts to aid SEND learners with their comprehension. These have been highly effective in easing anxiety around the shift for children and

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

- **Visual timetables** – SEND learners can struggle particularly with the sudden changes in school routine caused by Covid-19. A visual timetable is a great way to break down the day's schedule using familiar visual prompts, helping to improve the child's understanding of what is happening and ability to anticipate the next activity.
- **Social stories** – Another useful tool, social stories can be used to depict a situation the pupil might experience, for example moving an in-person lesson online, to help explain the change in routine and give the child time to adjust.
- **What if? activity** – During this period of change and uncertainty, children are likely feeling more anxious and in need of reassurance than usual. The What if? exercise can help by encouraging children to share any questions they might have, for example, 'what if I can't make new friends at secondary school?', and discuss answers together with their teacher or SENCO.

parents alike. Where it is safe to do so, drop in visits at home can also be useful to talk through the changes in person with the child and provide some peace of mind for the whole family.

SEND encompasses a huge umbrella of needs and each child is different, so making sure each pupil receives the personalised support they need to cope with their mental wellbeing during Covid-19 is essential. We can foster lifelong emotional resilience through equipping young people with valuable communication skills and sharing vital resources to help make sense of the sudden changes to both school and home life.



Natalie Browne, Behaviour Lead at HES (London Borough of Havering's Education Services)

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Engage our KS1 Consultants and inspire your team to rethink their practice and provision. Gain bespoke training, facilitated discussion and learning walks into current routines and ways of teaching in order to open up new ways of working that will enrich children's learning opportunities and expand the curriculum.

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Access high-level, online training for your whole team and ensure that all staff are motivated to reflect on the impact of their current practice and provision. Strengthen the link between the learning environment and the curriculum, explore a range of teaching styles and how to evidence and demonstrate progress.

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Buildings & procurement

TAKE A JOINED-UP APPROACH

Sue Birchall gives her advice on site maintenance and how to manage your budget

According to the information supplied by the school census, as of January 2021 there were 24,413 schools in England serving a total 8,911,887 pupils, an increase of 53 schools from the previous count.

Schools manage their sites with various support staff roles, often responsibility for the day-to-day sits with the school business professional in post. Site management is one of the competencies in the Institute of School Business Professionals framework and is an important part of the role. Often in schools we lack a joined-up approach to different areas of our responsibility. A School Business professional will link site management to budget, capacity, health and safety and suitability which will ensure that you use it to the school or academy's best advantage.

Site management can look different depending on your setting. From the PFI model where you have a management company to the smaller school which employs a caretaker and manages everything locally the aim is the same, a safe and suitable learning environment for our students. The statutory requirements are standard regardless of the size of the site and are covered by regulation, areas such as health and safety, legionella, asbestos management to name but a few.

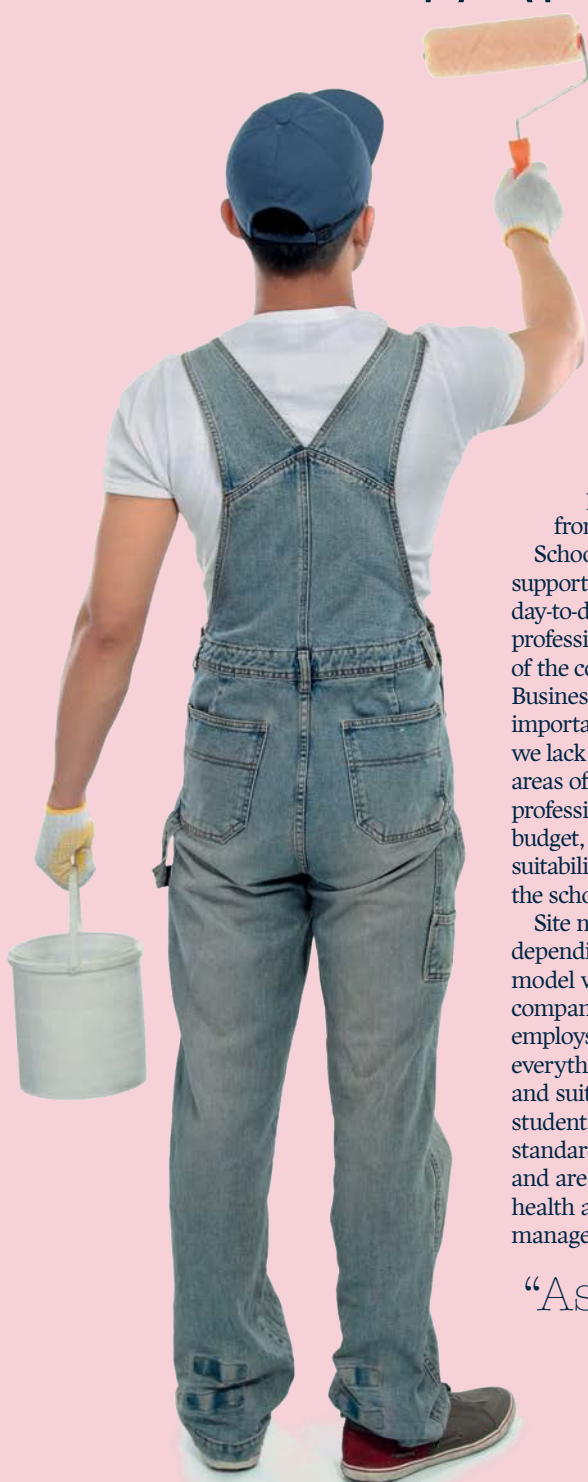
EXPENDITURE

Site is also an area which carries some risk where the school budget is concerned. While day-to-day costs can easily be budgeted for within our three or even five-year budgeting cycle, a crystal ball is required for unforeseen expenditure. Several methodologies can be used to risk assess what is required over the period of the budget cycle, including historical spend and knowledge of the site. This is enhanced by having strict processes and procedures in place to record and support the management of site. Knowing that you are three years into the five-year electrical testing cycle for instance means that you know the cost is going to occur in the next two years.

As a local authority school you will have the statutory items taken care of and as part of a Multi Academy Trust or as a Voluntary Aided school this may also be the case but a working knowledge of what happens when is necessary. In addition, an eye on your net capacity assessment and viewing this when you are looking at your strategic planning will help to plan for future need.

The continuously reducing devolved capital allocation that is available for maintained schools means that those of us who remain so have to be a little more innovative in how we manage our sites.

“As with all other processes in schools, good communication is key.”



An ongoing budget for maintenance and repair is imperative to ensure that the site is fit for purpose. Grander improvements or changes have to be funded through planning and setting aside budgets, applying to the LA if there is a capacity need or through sponsorship and fundraising.

DEMANDS

For VA schools the ability to apply for LCVAP means that with good planning bigger projects can be funded to the value of up to 90 per cent, VAT rules for this differ so it is worth a working knowledge. Academies and MATs have access to Condition Improvement Funding for additional works, this is on top of the school condition funding that they will receive.

If we are lucky, we will have an amazing site team who manage the day-to-day caretaking and site management. The relationship between your Site Manager and SBP is as essential as the one between the SBP and the Headteacher or Principal. As with all other processes in schools, good communication is key. Often, site demands are immediate and demanding and without a working relationship and planning, staff turnover can be high for site staff.

SECURITY

You can of course outsource many of the site responsibilities. There are a myriad of digital processes for managing your responsibilities for site, for recording statutory responsibilities and even site management itself. Along with that, service level agreements for cleaning, catering and maintenance (many schools have these for grounds work for instance) can be worth looking at. While they could be more expensive, they offer security, sustainability and accountability which is attractive to a busy school. Economy of scale can be achieved if buying collaboratively.

However, you choose to manage your site, it is as important as every other area of school, our students deserve a learning environment that is fit for purpose.

Sue Birchall is a consultant, speaker, writer, trainer and business manager at The Malling School, Kent



ENSURE EVERYONE HAS ACCESS

Lara Curtis asks is your access plan fit for purpose?

Do schools need an accessibility plan? Yes, it is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010 for schools to have an accessibility plan. This needs to be approved by their governing or trust board.

Fundamentally, it must support disabled pupils in accessing and benefiting from education, facilities and services.

Some recommendations:

- Improve the physical environment. It is essential that all pupils, staff, and visitors can easily access playgrounds and buildings.
- Widening existing interior openings and adding new external doors with ramped access. Ensure that the ramp surface is slip-resistant with a GRP platform or rubber crumb soft surface. Any DDA improvements may require to be signed off by building control and comply with Document M and K of the building regulations. Remember that the minimum width of a ramped or stepped approach is 1,500mm and the minimum handrail height for a level platform is 1,100mm. Also, if the ramp height exceeds 380mm, Infill handrails are required to prevent users from climbing or falling through gaps.
- Removing dilapidated or unsafe access structures. This includes replacing any rotting or slippery wooden ramps.
- Provide ramped access to play spaces.
- Provide on-site disabled toilets and changing facilities.
- Provide handrails to support individuals with limited mobility.

IMPROVE THE EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY

Implement measures to ensure disabled staff and pupils' safety in the event of a fire. Improvements can include:

- Providing wheelchair accessible fire exits. Ensure to choose a ramp that is non-combustible, such as a metal system. Wooden ramps will burn if exposed to fire.
- Ensure to have audible and visual alarms to assist the deaf and hearing impaired.

Improve access to information, including around the school and in the classroom:

- Ensure signage includes visuals to allow pupils of all literacy levels to comprehend.
- Invest in products and teaching resources to support pupils with varying learning difficulties or disabilities, such as dyslexia, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia Autism and Asperger's syndrome.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Offer staff training on topics such as invisible disabilities. Not all disabilities are visible – some are hidden and not immediately obvious, such as learning difficulties, mental health as well as mobility, speech, visual or hearing impairments.

There are many measures that can be taken depending on each school's individual circumstances and environments. However, an access audit will identify many necessary improvements.

Lara Curtis, Marketing Coordinator for Rapid Ramp, www.rapidramp.co.uk, sales@rapidramp.co.uk

“Offer staff training on topics such as invisible disabilities.”

A passion for fundraising

Gina Bailey explains how fundraising and collaborating with your local community can support vulnerable families all year round

In the past year families have relied upon their schools and local communities more than ever. For many, the abrupt change in circumstances or sudden loss of income has been hard to come to terms with. For some, the pandemic has meant an exasperation of an already dire situation, pushing vulnerable families to a new level of crisis.

With steadily rising figures of households experiencing a significant loss of income, there are families who previously did not require any additional support, who are now eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) and Free School Meals. Any headteacher will tell you what a lifeline this grant can be for families who are really struggling to get by. So, though it is sad that the demand has increased, it is also positive to know that families can get the help they need.

In the months leading up to Christmas, we knew that there were families where there was a strong possibility that the children would not receive any Christmas presents due to extreme financial hardship. We collaborated with Young Carers and with the help of donations, we were able to provide these children with either gifts for Christmas or care packs, which included worry monsters and sweets.

We also received a generous donation from a local company, Land Sheriffs. With the money we were able to buy 30 Christmas Hampers for extremely vulnerable families. These hampers contained a variety of essential foods, cake mixes so that parents could bake with their children, Christmas crackers for Christmas Day and other festive goodies to make the season merry. This supplemented the Food Bank boxes we had already been distributing alongside the Local Authority food vouchers.

Projects like these have been, and will continue to be, invaluable to those struggling within our school communities. However, achieving meaningful outcomes often comes from having the ability within your school to do so. Your teaching team are likely to already be at full capacity, so having people available who have a passion and knowledge for fundraising projects is essential. Naturally, school budgets may not necessarily permit a dedicated fundraiser on the team, which is why we have utilised the talent and skills of our pastoral team.

Our schools are committed to effective pastoral care and whole school community wellbeing, so investing heavily in a knowledgeable and talented pastoral team



“Combining fundraising projects with our pastoral work has also made us more visible to parents and carers.”

was a no-brainer. Our onsite therapists and pastoral managers form such strong bonds with our pupils, as providers of therapeutic and emotional support, attendance monitoring, safeguarding and wellbeing.

A major area of concern for the pastoral team has been the risk of holiday hunger and the effects that lockdown may have had on the mental health of vulnerable families. Their dedication and passion around these topics have informed much of the extra work we have taken on to run effective fundraising projects.

Outreach has been an essential part of making these projects a reality and has also helped to make our school community larger. I speak directly with our local MP Robert Halfon, to inform him of the wellbeing projects we are running. From doing this, he introduced me to the local business who supported our Christmas Hamper project.

We have since been approached by others such as the Harlow Health Centre Trust,

who wanted to donate to a similar project that could be run over the Easter holidays.

Combining fundraising projects with our pastoral work has also made us more visible to parents and carers. Families can see the dedication we have to our projects and are more likely to engage with the school when they are struggling as a result. When families are transparent with us, we can provide targeted support and stop problems before they grow and become unmanageable.

I have truly seen the benefits of using a holistic approach within our school communities. When we collaborate and take care of the wellbeing of the whole, our pupils, their families, our staff, and the local community, we build a system that supports vulnerable families all year around and not just during term time.

Gina Bailey, Headteacher of both St James' Church of England Primary School and William Martin Church of England Schools based in Harlow, Essex

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A strain on finances

John Jolly examines the pressure put on school fundraising during the Covid-19 pandemic

Every year, a representative sample of our PTAs provides us with a snapshot of their activities. This includes how much money they raised for their school and how it has been spent.

Parent volunteers are an essential part of the life blood of any school community, and their fundraising efforts enable schools to invest in a wide range of essential and additional resources that improve the educational experience of pupils. During the pandemic, PTAs have faced monumental difficulties, not least when traditional summer and Christmas fairs had to be cancelled due to coronavirus restrictions. Unsurprisingly, the majority told us that the pandemic was their biggest challenge of 2020.

Partial school closures asked all parents to play a bigger role in their child's learning, but simultaneously limited the effectiveness of parent groups. While embedding the parental role more deeply in education and strengthening that vital home and school partnership was one positive to come out of the pandemic, unfortunately the outlook was gloomier for our PTAs. Although a significant £79.5 million was raised during 2020, this was down from £121 million in 2019. Without coronavirus restrictions, the combined total was projected to exceed £150 million last year. Instead, PTAs' estimated 2020 losses amounted to £75 million.

VITAL

PTAs also tell us how they spend their funds, which helps to build a picture of where schools will have missed out. The most popular contribution last year was in supplying essential educational materials such as text books, classroom and sports equipment.

More than six out of ten PTAs paid for leavers' gifts/events to give pupils at the end of their school journey memories to treasure for life. More than four in ten spent money on outdoor learning areas, playground and IT equipment. Over a third channelled funding into health and wellbeing activities, as well as books and furniture for their school library. All of these areas of school life are vital to children's learning and development, and any reduction in a PTA's income impairs their

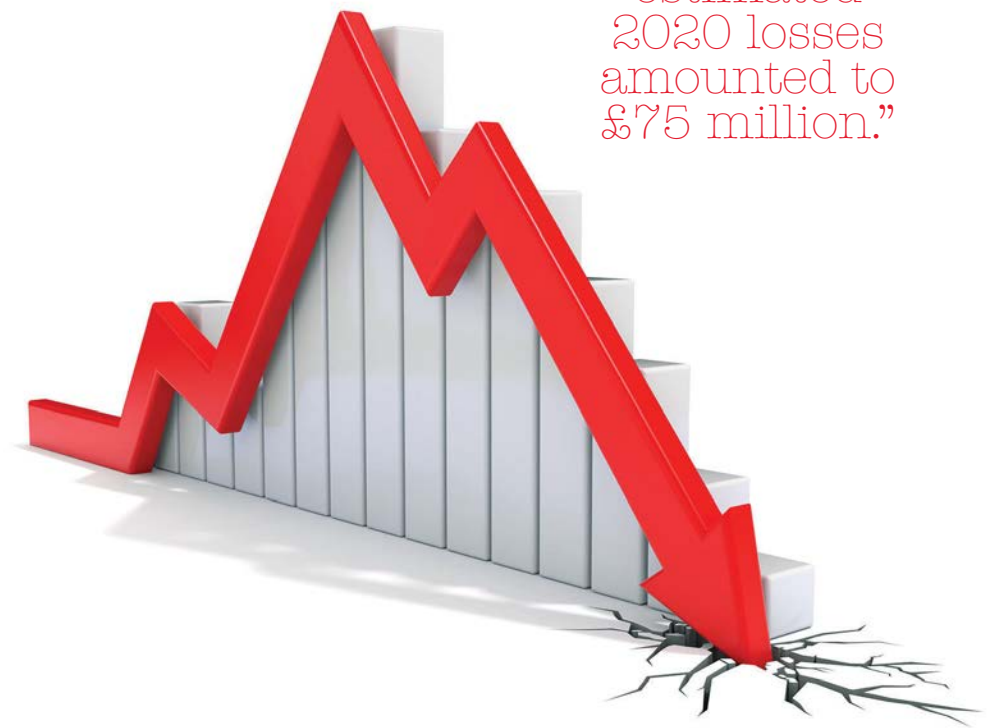
ability to help their school.

A highlight of this summer was holding Parentkind's inaugural National PTA Week. We celebrated the amazing contributions PTAs make, showcasing to policymakers, teachers, the public and parents themselves just how crucial parent volunteers are to school life. It's not just about fundraising, though in the past three years, our PTAs have accrued a staggering £308.5 million for schools. But they also bind school communities and provide help and support to local parents. During the pandemic, many found innovative ways to hold virtual or socially-distanced events to unite people during an especially stressful and worrying time.

CONDUIT

Parentkind also hosted National PTA Awards within National PTA Week. We had six award categories including PTA of the Year, which this time deservedly went to the Community at Linden Lodge. They represent a special school for visually impaired or deaf-blind children that serves families across a wide area. The parent volunteers knew that being

“PTAs’
estimated
2020 losses
amounted to
£75 million.”



a conduit between school and homes was crucial in giving isolated parents that additional level of support. They reached out to those needing help with shopping or picking up medication, and fed back to staff any parental concerns about the return to school for vulnerable children. Their actions ensured that families were kept informed, supported and connected during such a difficult and troubling period.

It's been a busy time for us at Parentkind, adjusting to changing circumstances to provide our PTAs with the membership package they need, just as they have adjusted to ensure they can keep providing for their schools and communities. It was inspirational to hear all of their stories, and fulfilling to bring to wider public attention the extraordinary and wide-ranging contributions PTAs make to school life. That's why we'll be making National PTA Week an annual event, to keep raising the profile of often unsung heroes. We want every school to benefit from a strong PTA.

John Jolly, CEO of Parentkind, the largest network of PTA fundraisers in the UK

A CALM AND INVITING ENVIRONMENT

Abigail Davis explains how a 15th century manor house was transformed into a safe and stimulating learning environment for children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)



occupational therapists work alongside a multi-disciplinary clinical team including psychologists and music and drama therapists which we share with our sister schools - Yiewsley Grange (Primary School) in West Drayton and Hillingdon Manor (Secondary School) in Hillingdon, Uxbridge. We follow the National Curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage and Equals Semi Formal Curriculum, alongside our forest school led by a full time Level 4 forest school teacher.

CHALLENGING

Our professional team is of course the most important part of our provision, but we also know that the environment is hugely important. All our children have Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and complex communication and sensory needs. Entering a new environment can be a challenging experience, it can impact their behaviour and trigger dysregulation, so we needed to ensure that the environment we designed would support them. We wanted to provide a calm and inviting space where children could explore and learn with the minimum of disruptive environmental triggers. The world can be an extremely challenging place for children with autism and many experience high levels of anxiety, that is why when we were designing the school, every aspect was looked at from a child's perspective, we wanted to get everything right, right from the start.

Of course we want to support the children academically, but social skills are equally important, with communication and independence at the top of the list. So I continuously asked myself - "How can I ensure that the students will be as independent as possible when they leave?" With this in mind I am able to provide myself with clear steps each term in order to meet the overarching goal.

MAGNIFICENT

The school is situated in large grounds in a beautiful building built in the 15th century by the Merton Priory monks, it still maintains many of its traditional structural features and details. We specifically chose this site due to the magnificent size and space within the

Upton Grange School is situated just five minutes away from Slough town centre, with outdoor spaces, parks and woodland on its doorstep. Our school opened in response to growing regional demand for specialist provision.

We offer an exceptional learning environment that aims to remove the barriers to learning to enable children with autism and complex communication and sensory

needs, to realise their full academic potential and develop essential social, emotional and life skills with the support of our dedicated and specialised team.

We provide small class sizes - between six to ten children, who are supported by a teacher and two teaching assistants, and each child benefits from an individualised and child-centred approach so they can progress at their own pace appropriate to their specific needs. The in-house speech and language and

“As every child has a different learning profile, being able to change the rooms and classroom environments is critical to success - adaptability is key.”

building that we could adapt to provide for the needs of the children. We love the building and its history - it's an incredible feeling teaching these children in a building that has been a place of learning for hundreds of years, it's almost like you're honouring it by teaching the next generation.

Children's safety is our top priority so we adapted some of the features within the building - we installed clear safety screens on the bannisters in the stairways, keyless fob locks and CCTV cameras, but we still kept the overall integrity and feel of the building.

Each of the five classrooms caters for between six-ten children, and is designed to meet their needs. As every child has a different learning profile, being able to change the rooms and classroom environments is critical to success - adaptability is key. The children are free to move about the classroom and other spaces without hindering their learning or the need to hastily reconfigure rooms for different lessons. The spaces are clutter free and calm, with muted colours and ambient lighting.

Originally, one of the classrooms was very large which would have been acoustically intolerable for our sound sensitive children, so we divided it into three quieter spaces, with a separate one-to-one therapy room so each child's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can be met in a calm environment. Each classroom was set up in consultation with occupational and speech and language therapists to support and encourage the children's development and optimise learning.



CALMING

The interior colours were chosen by a specialist to create a peaceful ambience to minimize potential environmental triggers for the children and provide a haven for learning. Wooden furniture complements the exposed roof beams making a natural and calming feeling throughout the school, and chairs and tables were matched to meet the children's needs to help promote correct posture. The dedicated sensory room provides space to help children regulate their emotions and be ready to learn. At the heart of the school is a beautiful spacious multi-purpose hall where we enjoy lunch, dance groups, exercise and free play.

The beautiful landscaped grounds and surrounding forest woodland provide ample space for the children to exercise and a natural setting for learning. We believe in a holistic approach to academic development, so all the children have frequent access to outside and attend forest school each week, regardless of academic or behavioural difficulties. Forest school provides inspiration and challenges that simply cannot be replicated in the classroom. Our outdoor learning opportunities include self-directed play and exploration, and every child experiences a wide variety of activities to help build their social communication, confidence, creativity, understanding, curiosity and self-esteem.

Forest school also provides hands on experience for environmental education, with the children planting and growing vegetables in our vegetable garden. The children explore the importance of being 'green' with a 'green challenge' once a term where they get involved in various environmentally friendly tasks. We also support sustainability in the kitchen with our onsite chef using locally sourced ingredients whenever he can. We recycle throughout our school and teach the children to recycle as well.

COMMUNITY

As we are new to the area, we recognise the importance of forging links with the local community. We would love our children to get involved in 'real life' projects such as fundraising events - experiences that will help them develop life skills and also lead to more public

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Create a safe and secure environment that supports the children and helps them become more independent.**
- **Classrooms need to be designed to be calm spaces that are welcoming and not overwhelming without environmental triggers - if possible, seek guidance from design specialists and therapists.**
- **Spaces need to be adaptable to provide for the needs of each child.**
- **Staff need to be knowledgeable and trained in ASC to implement a challenging but appropriate curriculum tailored to the needs of the children.**
- **A therapy team to support the development of communication skills and implement Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).**
- **The management must have clear aims and create an ethos which is felt throughout the school and understood by all the staff - a dedication to learning and exploring new and exciting ways to help the children**

awareness. We want to promote a school culture of imagination, illustration, participation and integration - encouraging our children to seek a deeper understanding of the why, what and how, and learn to generalise their communication and problem solving skills in different environments. We want to provide our children with autism-appropriate education and support that enables them to develop their communication skills, independence and essential social skills to prepare them for life beyond school and in society.

For further information on Upton Grange School please call 0753 971090 or email enquiries@ghmschool.org.uk.



Abigail Davis, Head of Education at Upton Grange School, Slough

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TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Christian Hendriksen provides a practical guide to clean air inside the school gates

In a bid to improve air quality surrounding the capital's schools, the Mayor of London has closed roads to traffic and launched the new London Schools Pollution Helpdesk. But what about indoor air, where concentrations of pollutants are two to five times higher than outdoors?

The Mayor notes that outdoor air pollution exacerbates the risk of contracting Covid-19 and of suffering the most serious effects, but the real risk of transmission is inside the school premises. The World Health Organisation's latest advice on Coronavirus places far greater emphasis on transmission from inhaled airborne droplets, rather than from touching contaminated surfaces. That shifts the emphasis from fomite cleaning and disinfection to air purification.

For schools, the need to improve indoor air quality poses a substantial problem. According to the Lancet's Covid-19 commission, schools are chronically under-ventilated. The likelihood of airborne virus transmission is amplified in crowded indoor spaces, particularly if people are in the same room together for an extended period of time or when enhanced aerosol generation is likely, for example through singing, projected speech and aerobic activity.

ANTIQUATED

However, budgets are severely stretched. Many school buildings are old, with antiquated ventilation systems. Others are listed, demanding bespoke and costly retrofits. With expensive heating bills, any reluctance to open windows during winter is understandable. Data gathered through the Department for Education's school Condition Data Collection programme suggests that one in six schools in England requires urgent repairs: competing priorities, such as structural repairs, may make a complete overhaul of ventilation an impossibility.

Fortunately, integrated ventilation systems are not the only solution. Portable air purifiers can do an effective job, either enhancing an existing ventilation system or working in isolation. The investment is just a fraction of what it would cost for an in-built ventilation system and, with products that can prove independent testing by recognised research laboratories, the performance can be at least as good, if not better, than their larger counterparts.

When making the case for air purification, the argument goes way beyond Coronavirus. Clean air has been proven to prevent the spread of all disease and to prevent allergic reactions, thereby minimising absenteeism and promoting



“For schools, the need to improve indoor air quality poses a substantial problem.”

learning. What is often overlooked is its ability to enhance children's concentration and capacity for learning. To quote The Economist, “More investment would be money well spent. Better indoor air boosts academic performance — maths and reading scores go up, and pupils are measurably more attentive in class”.

VARIANTS

Education has suffered greatly during the pandemic. Post lockdown, the priority for school governors is to keep schools open, while protecting the health and safety of students, teachers and their respective families. It's a duty of care that no school takes lightly and, without additional mitigation to combat new variants, the risk of transmission will increase.

A recent article in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine has called for higher standards of ventilation in classrooms and cites portable HEPA filtration units as a practical

option to complement fresh air. In assessing the risk of airborne infection with SARS-CoV-2, atmospheric researchers from Goethe University have demonstrated that air purifiers with an H13 HEPA filter can lower aerosol concentration in a classroom by 90 per cent within 30 minutes. By deploying a unit that can process up to 560m³ of air per hour, a typical 240m³ school lab (larger than a classroom) would in fact have clean air within the same short time frame.

Air purification that combines HEPA filtration with germicidal UVC light both traps and destroys viruses and bacteria. Such devices are recommended by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) committee, which emphasises the importance of independent testing and warns that “technologies based on UVA/UVB, ionisation, plasma, electrostatic precipitation and oxidation methods have limited evidence of efficacy against the virus and/or significant concerns over toxicological risks during application”.

The argument for clean air in schools is clear. Now, thanks to portable, hospital-grade air purification, so too is a practical solution.

Christian Hendriksen, co-founder & CEO of Rensair, a specialist in air purification.
www.rensair.com

SIGNIFICANT CHANGE REQUIRES SERIOUS PLANNING

Anthony David offers ideas and strategies on how to plan your maintenance schedule, who to involve and how to split costs between capital and revenue budgets



Site maintenance is both a thorn and opportunity for school leaders. If you are new to a school it can present as overwhelming, particularly with older sites. Similarly, it is amazing how five years can fly by as a substantive head and realise that the last time Y2 was decorated is now measurable in decades. Aside from staffing, this will be your highest cost and if you are planning a significant change could require serious planning.

The importance of how we manage our site was brought home to me recently when a local headteacher visited one of my schools. He was new in post and what hit him was how a 200-year-old building could look very 21st century inside. His past experience was that every penny must be spent solely on education and not on the site. While this is

noble, it is misleading. What your site looks like can have as much an impact on moral and standards as any investment into a learning strategy. Talk to any architect and they will wax lyrical on the importance of environment and how it can affect our output. However, if you are new to post it can be a daunting prospect. Even a small school requires a plan and, given limited finances, patience.

UNDERSTANDING

Maintenance can feel overwhelming. The likelihood is that you are running a small school (the average sized primary is one-form entry with a nursery) so may not have access to a bursar or site management team. Conversely, however, this can speed things up; fewer people to discuss issues with

reduces time spent negotiating future ideas. Key is understanding your site and its needs. To begin this process it is worth considering what the main reasons for maintenance are. Typically, there are four main reasons for site maintenance:

- Preventative
- Predictive
- Planned
- Condition based

Of these, condition based and preventative maintenance are arguably the least glamorous. As with your house, what we want to spend out capital on will be changes that are aesthetic but the reality is that wiring will need checking/changing, roofs leak over time if not protected and blown windows will need replacing. Understanding

“There are too many stories of where old schools with poorly maintained sites have narrowly avoided serious injuries.”

the condition of your site will be your starting point, not least because poor condition can lead to increased safety risks.

There are too many stories of where old schools with poorly maintained sites have narrowly avoided serious injuries (a recent example was where a complete sash window frame fell out from the third story of a school during the night; had it happened in the day it would have most likely seriously injured somebody). It is for this reason that many headteachers are calling out for additional finances to eliminate potential life-changing or life-risking accidents that could occur from known site conditions.

Once you understand the condition of your site it is from this point that you can begin to plan and make predictions on what changes will be required. Once you have reached this point there are five key principles to bear in mind with any site maintenance strategy:

Key principles:

1. Plan rather react
2. Adjust to need and finances
3. Seek advice – don't go it alone
4. Keep others in the loop
5. Follow the plan

Planning your impact will be driven by a number of things typically including your conditions survey/research and your school vision. From here you are able to begin to allocate finances. It is at this point that you need to bring in other stakeholders. Typically these will include a key governor, site manager, finance officer and (if you have one) surveyor. A simple site survey would detail three core spaces:

- Classrooms/learning spaces
- Shared areas such as halls and corridors
- External areas including playgrounds

Each sub-section of your report should detail the name of the location, the maintenance needs that identified, anticipated cost, and projected date for completion (based on what is reasonable in terms of budget). Within this plan, you may also want to identify the location of the budget. You will have a set amount of budget for basic repairs and maintenance. A good school will use this budget strategically to reduce the reliance on purely capital income for larger ticket items such as replacing boilers or roofs. This will allow you manage your plan more quickly.

QUICK FIXES THAT ARE LOW COST

All headteachers want a site manager who is a Jack/Jackie of all trades. The likelihood of this is, sadly, low as a typical site manager's salary does not attract such broadly-skilled people. What you can do, however, is train your staff to meet your school's known needs. Typically for most schools this will be either:

- Plumbing skills
- Redecoration skills

A low-level leak (such as an external water fountain or tap) can, if left unattended, cause significant damage. Water is highly corrosive. Equally, dripping taps will become costly if left overtime. Basic plumbing courses will quickly pay for themselves rather than relying on external plumbers. Any external agent will be more expensive than in house.

The same can be said about decoration. You will have classes that will require redecorating at least every three years. High use areas (such as corridors) may require annual or every other year. To paint a typical classroom costs around £1,500-2,000. If you are using external agencies to redecorate your spaces it will be costing the school around £6,000 a year. If your site manager is trained to do this the cost dramatically falls to the cost of the paint.

USE OF CAPITAL: ACADEMY, VA AND STATE

Big changes rely on big capital; it's a simple equation. How you receive that capital will depend on your type of school. State and church schools (typically VA/VC schools) will have a local pot that they can bid for with their surveyor or local representative. A key difference is that VA/VC schools must fund the first ten per cent of any capital programme. This is where VA/VC schools suffer in terms of potentially lower funding than state schools, however, recent changes in law have reduced this inequality. That said, there is still the expectation that VA/VC schools should be paying into this to justify their different status to state schools (many of the rights that we recently identify with academies are well established within VA/VC schools). If you are leading a VA/VC school, you will have a maintenance fund established with your parents. This can be an

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Big changes rely on big capital.
- First impressions matter.
- Train your staff to meet your school's known needs.
- You need to bring in other stakeholders.
- Consider what the main reasons for maintenance are.
- Once you understand the condition of your site it is from this point that you can begin to plan and make predictions on what changes will be required.
- What your site looks like can have as much an impact on moral and standards as any investment into a learning strategy.

area of contention in terms of expectation of financial giving from families. The bottom line is that there is no insistence on what could be given but a healthy figure would be around 30-50 per cent of your families giving regularly. Academies operate in a way that is similar to state schools with the principle difference being that an academy chain will seek to fund capital a whole group from central government (as it is unlikely that a medium or larger MAT is geographically located on one area).

A FINAL POINT

To conclude, it is not just pupils and staff who will benefit from a well-maintained site, it is also potential families and guests. First impressions matter and in a time of rapid change following the pandemic where scores of families are choosing to leave larger cities and move out (and this is most acute in London), keeping your pupil numbers up is more critical than ever. While you may well have the most innovative ideas, there is truth in that many parents judge a book by its cover. Many well-established schools run the risk of losing out to shiny, new academies. A planned strategy of maintenance can reduce this risk and increase the chance of maintaining pupil numbers and keeping budgets stable.



Anthony David, executive headteacher St Paul's CE Primary School and Monken Hadley CE Primary School

SINK OR SWIM - THE OPERATIONAL SIDE OF EDUCATION

Roz McLaren shares some of the lessons she's learned along the way to managing a large budget



In just a short time, I went from having zero premises knowledge to managing an annual six figure capital budget.

"The sump pump has gone - we're going to have to shut the school... again."

These were words that greeted me regularly in my first few months as School Business Manager at Lavender Primary School, a two-form entry school in North London.

I think it's fair to say that sump pumps were well outside my comfort zone. Twenty years with Legal & General in finance roles, followed by retraining and working as a teacher for five years, had provided limited exposure to major heating systems. And, yet,

here I found myself in early 2017 scrambling up and down rickety metal ladders, being shown in great detail the interior workings of an ancient boiler by a heating contractor.

I was very new to the role but it hadn't taken me long to realise that I would be quickly dealing with many areas of school life that had remained hidden during my time in the classroom. But such is the reality of life for those dealing with the operational side of education. The likelihood of any one individual having the breadth of knowledge required - from finance, budgeting, health and safety, HR, premises management, governance, IT - to fulfil the job description/person specification is pretty remote.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Historically, many of these roles had been handled by specialists within local authorities, allowing schools to get on with the job of teaching children. As local government cuts reduced the capacity of councils to carry out these responsibilities, they had been devolved to headteachers, many of whom had then appointed School Business Managers, often from within their existing office teams, to allow further delegation. At that time, there was very limited support available for these individuals, so it was a case of being chucked in at the deep end and quickly discovering whether this would result in sinking or

swimming. That was very much where I found myself and things were about to get a whole lot more complicated. In September 2017, Lavender joined with another local school to form Ivy Learning Trust, and I was appointed as Chief Operating Officer, responsible for all the operational aspects of two schools. Within a year, there were four schools; within two years there were six; within three years eight; and now ten primary schools spread across Enfield and Hertfordshire.

So, I am now responsible for ten school sites, with school buildings ranging from early 20th century to brand new, and facilities in a variety of states of repair. Each school has a site manager who can provide hands-on support to their headteacher but strategic decisions and larger project management falls to the Ivy Central Team. Fortunately, I am blessed with an amazing team, some of whom are very experienced with premises matters, some of whom were as inexperienced as I was when we started. What they all have in common is an absolute devotion to supporting the schools with keeping their sites safe and functional.

RELATIONSHIPS

A classic example is when one of our headteachers rang me late on Friday evening to say that she had a leak in school, but couldn't get hold of anyone. She felt that it could be left until Monday morning, so I sent a message to the team to ask someone to arrange for a plumber to visit the school after the weekend. Five minutes later, however, my deputy came back to say she had arranged for a contractor to visit first thing Saturday morning. The willingness of contractors to put themselves out and support us in this way is a direct result of the positive relationships built up by the premises team with the companies they deal with.

We have also worked hard since establishing the trust to maximise any funding opportunities for larger jobs - these would have been paid for by local authorities in the past, but after academisation we needed to submit bids to the Condition Improvement Fund. This is a pot of government money available each year to

academies, applied for through a complex online portal which is prone to falling over at vital moments. In the first year, I put the bids together myself, with the result that we received precisely nothing. It turned out that there were lots of requirements (Gantt charts, photographic evidence etc) that were needed as part of the bid.

Following advice from a knowledgeable source, we decided to appoint a consultant for the next round and were much more successful with their support. In fact, over the following two years, we received £1.2 million in funding and were able to replace three boilers (including the one that had blighted my early days at Lavender) and a roof. Our growth in size since 2017 has meant that we are now eligible for School Condition Allocation which is a fixed capital amount received

each year. This enables us to plan much more strategically and efficiently to keep our buildings in optimal condition and our children and staff members safe.

While we will use a consultant to support us with prioritisation and the larger jobs, my premises team are now so capable that I have complete confidence in them to deliver most of the wide range of projects that we have identified as priorities. Our aim is that over time each school will benefit proportionately from this capital funding and that, once any urgent health and safety projects have been completed, we can look to be more ambitious and wide-ranging in our estate management planning.

CONSTRAINTS

It has been so pleasing to see the joy on our headteachers' faces when they realise that, for example, the Early Years outside area improvements or the WIFI network upgrade that they had thought would be impossible to fund, given increasing budget constraints, will now be possible. They are also incredibly understanding of the fact that some schools will benefit more in the short term than others, but I'm keen that we ensure everyone gets something from the pot.

Before the pandemic came along, our school Eco Teams were extremely active,

HERE'S WHAT TO DO

- **Do whatever it takes to surround yourself with a great team - attitude is more important than experience, although a bit of knowledge is obviously helpful.**
- **Build up a network of contractors across a range of functions who you can trust and who you and your team have excellent relationships with.**
- **But... if you feel that a contractor you have been using is 'going off the boil' and is no longer as committed to your interests as they were, don't let misplaced loyalty get in the way of quickly finding a replacement.**
- **Explore any funding opportunities available - use a consultant for at least your first round of bids to ensure they are presented in the way most likely to be successful.**
- **Try to ensure you have an experienced and supportive trustee/governor on your board who can help to guide you and provide additional expertise.**

setting up a campaign against single use plastic water bottles which received a great deal of publicity and showed the enthusiasm for environmental issues waiting to be tapped. I'm keen, therefore, to work with them and the wider school communities to invest capital across Ivy in making the estate as energy efficient as possible through things like solar panels, LED lighting, more environmentally friendly heating systems etc.

So, from being a rank novice not so long ago, I am delighted to find myself in a position - thanks to having a great and incredibly committed team, positive relationships with excellent consultants and contractors, plus access to a predictable amount of capital funding - to ensure that all Ivy schools have the estates they need to provide the excellent education our children and staff deserve.



Roz McLaren is chief operating officer of Ivy Learning Trust, a family of ten primary schools in Enfield and Hertfordshire

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Schools

How effective is your learning environment?

Liz Marsden asks how effective are your EYFS & KS1 Classrooms?

Critical to ensuring that all your children are making the best possible start to the new academic year is reviewing whether your EYFS and KS1 classrooms are working well; how quickly have the children settled into the new routines that develop their independence? How well are they using the indoor and outdoor environments to gain new experiences, deepen learning and build their confidence?

There are many nuances to how learning environments are arranged and how much space is given to certain elements of provision to meet children's needs, but there are a few generic principles to guide their development.

HOW WELL DEFINED IS THE USE OF THE SPACE?

Children will be more highly involved and engaged in an area of a classroom if the space is more clearly defined. This definition provides sufficient height and enclosure, not too much or too little. For children to become engrossed in their learning, whether child or adult initiated. Things to consider include:

- Is there enough space for the activity? How much of the room is dedicated to continuous provision and how much for more formal group work and whole class teaching?
- How are spaces used across the day, e.g., what are carpet areas used for during child-initiated learning?
- Does your provision allow for links in learning?

Key to maximising the impact of classroom provision is having clarity around how it connects to the curriculum and the opportunities it provides for rich, connected learning. Certain areas, when placed close together, can powerfully support this. For example, placing painting resources and workshop/model making areas together gives children access to a huge range of highly creative, mixed media possibilities. Placing Small World resources close to Blocks, provides children with opportunities to build the settings for their stories, supporting language development and early literacy.

INDEPENDENT THINKING

It is vital that young learners are encouraged to form their own ideas and are supported to develop the characteristics that enable them to carry these out independently. Having choice, being allowed to be curious and



“Children will be more highly involved and engaged in an area of a classroom if the space is more clearly defined.”

creative, as well as gaining support from adults to pursue an idea are all motivating factors that drive learning forward.

Things to consider include:

- When, and for how long, are children able to access continuous provision?
- Can children see what's available and get to the things they need easily?
- How are children supported in developing their expertise with resources, supporting their independence?
- How effective are your resources in supporting learning?

In an active classroom that values independent learning alongside adult directed teaching, the resources offered across the classroom need to earn their place. They become the prompts that ignite ideas, the stimulus that starts an investigation, the tools that take an idea from conception to completion and the resources that are necessary for practical group work and whole class teaching. Fundamentally, every resource should be selected for a purpose and given its place in the environment for a good reason – to meet your children's needs through your curriculum. For example, if we provide a set of almost identical buckets in sand and water, then learning will be limited. On the

other hand, if you offer a variety, such as a clear bucket, one with measured markers, buckets of different sizes and shapes, then children will be able to explore their properties and think far more mathematically.

This in turn leads to more mathematical conversations that deepen knowledge of key concepts such as similarities and differences, comparison, number, size and shape. So, when resources are selected for the children to use, knowing how they impact on your curriculum and being able to articulate this is vital. It's part of the professional tool kit needed to teach young children in EYFS and KS1 effectively.

NEXT STEPS

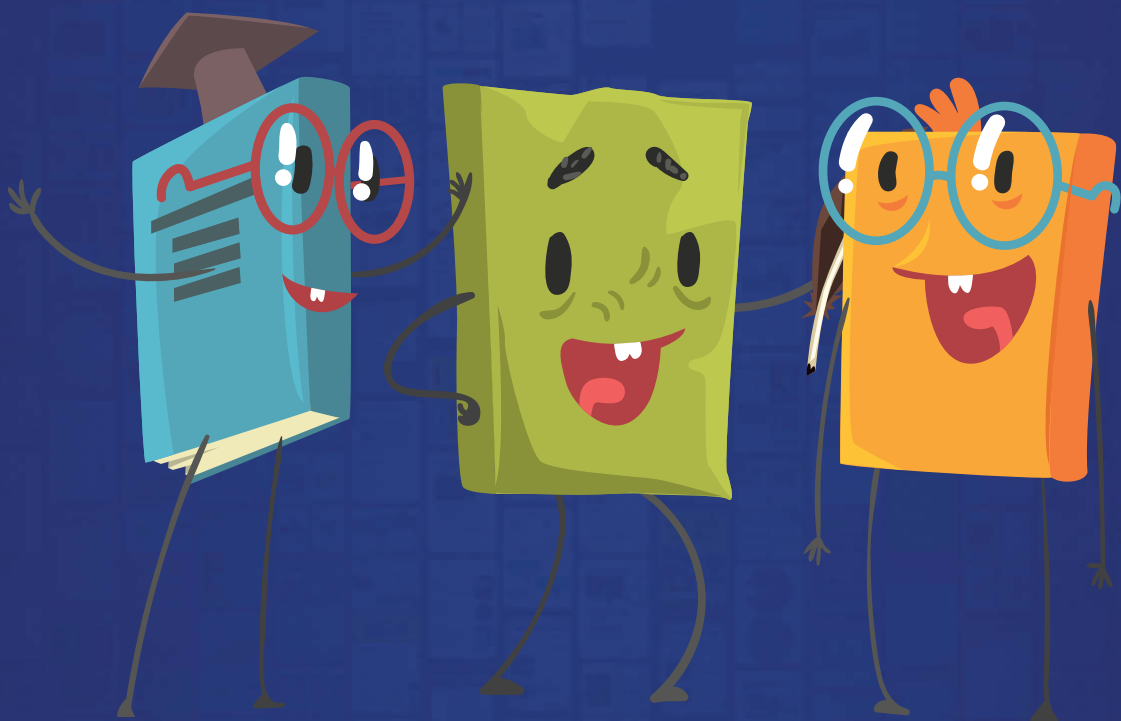
With all this in mind, we encourage you to find some time soon to review your environments and look again at how well your new cohort of children and your staff are using them to make every day an exciting and rewarding day for your children – and if you need support to review your practice or provision, we're always happy to help.

Liz Marsden, CEO Early Excellence, an established national leader of pedagogy, provision and practice, specialising in young children's education



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A NEW STRATEGY TO TACKLE SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Katy Pinchess will be using technology to help identify and address summer learning loss in the coming academic year

At Bentley CE Primary School, we are ready to welcome both new and familiar faces into the classroom after the summer break. And, as is the case in the vast majority of schools, there will be some additional challenges to overcome in addressing the issue of summer learning loss next year.

As the country continues to emerge from the pandemic, the task ahead is unlike any other. Early identification of lost learning will be key to providing the right support so that we can give every child the best possible start to the new term.

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

Despite the best efforts of teachers and parents, five months of homeschooling during the pandemic have taken their toll on pupil progress. We've seen the percentage of pupils needing high levels of support in their literacy development double from seven per cent in October 2020 to 14 per cent more recently. And we're not alone.

According to research recently conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation, schools across England have seen an increase in young children needing help with language skills, the essential foundations for literacy and a gateway to the wider curriculum.

The learning pupils lose over the summer

break this year will only add to an existing skills deficit brought on by the disruptions to learning caused by Covid-19.

For children with more complex issues, such as those with dyslexia, being away from the classroom through the holidays could potentially wipe out any progress made since restrictions were eased, and more pupils returned to school in the spring of 2021. This could have a significant impact on the longer-term achievement of the 2020/21 cohort.

So, we are focused on ensuring we can identify issues early as this is the first critical step to building back the literacy skills children need to progress in their learning.

INNOVATION IN THE CLASSROOM

The negative impact of the summer slide can affect any child, regardless of their prior ability. We want our teachers to get a clear understanding of where their pupils are in terms of their achievement in the early days and weeks of the new school year to prevent them from falling further behind. We will be using the latest in reading assessment technology to help us to do just that, quickly and simply.

We now routinely screen all children using a new piece of eye-tracking software with AI to get an accurate picture of their literacy skills. The technology, called Lexplore Analytics, allows us to look deeper into aspects of a child's reading that other more traditional tests are unable to reveal.

It helps us to monitor reading accuracy and fluency, but importantly, we can flag the specific issues children struggle with when they read, whether it's certain letters they get stuck on, words they find difficult or whole sentences they struggle to decipher.



Lexplore can pick up key details such as how long a child's eyes rest on a word and how quickly they move backwards or forwards from one sentence to the next. The results provide teachers with the information they need to pinpoint areas of reading that are causing issues – and also pick up the early indicators of dyslexia.

The insight we have gained from using the eye-tracking tool has made a real difference to the way we support children's progress in literacy at Bentley Primary. For example, we had one child who found every aspect of reading and writing a challenge from a young age. Looking at the results of the assessment, we could see clearly that there were no deep-seated issues that might be preventing her from developing the literacy skills she needed. It was simply a matter of building her confidence.

CONFIDENCE

Knowing this, we worked with the girl's parents to introduce more reading activities at home, including family board games and cooking from recipe books. The additional support the pupil received in school and at home not only encouraged her to read more, it made the act of reading much more fun too. As a result, we've already seen an improvement in the child's reading in a relatively short space of time.

We sometimes find parents need a little help to support their child effectively from home. So, we will often share the results from Lexplore with them. This approach proved effective for helping one six-year-old boy who was really struggling, despite having a clear desire to read.

Once the pupil's parents were given access to the data, they could see which words and letter combinations were challenging for him. This gave them much more confidence in their ability to help him, which in turn, made a real difference to his progress. He is now much more likely to pick up and enjoy reading books both inside and outside of the classroom.

REMOVE THE STIGMA

Children who find it difficult to learn to read and write often struggle to achieve what they are truly capable of across the wider curriculum. Falling behind their peers can have a knock-on effect on their self-esteem too. As a school, we want to do all we can to remove the stigma that can be attached to reading difficulties and help ensure teachers and parents have the information they need to prevent children's progress from being stifled by the summer learning slide.

Katy Pinchess MA(Hons) is headteacher of Bentley C of E Primary School, in Surrey



WE ALL NEED TO LEARN TO SHARE

Elliott Hateley outlines the advice the Trust was given and how sharing best practice has been key to its successful evolution

One of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal in the education sector is the ability to collaborate and share; one thing is certain, schools understand each other.

All schools want to do better and achieve more for their pupils and to this end, working with other schools to 'share' ideas and insight is a highly-valuable process; it's certainly something that I feel more schools should consider.

The most important thing to recognise is that this is not simply about schools of excellence helping failing schools. Once a school takes the initiative to invite other schools in to share their quality practices and soak up ideas, the visiting school will also benefit from the experience by simultaneously re-affirming their own infrastructure and practices.

INSPIRE

For us, change for the better started in the Autumn term last year during lockdown.

Based in a low socio-economic region, many of our children were struggling with remote learning due to shortages of IT devices. We were lucky enough to receive advice and guidance from a local EdTech 'Demonstrator School'; Pheasey Park Farm.

Pheasey is one of just 43 schools across the UK to be awarded the 'EdTech Demonstrator School' status by the DfE. We knew the team had already helped to inspire, motivate, and strengthen many schools' remote education and catch-up plans, but more importantly that they worked from a partnership perspective. Rather than just telling us what to do, they worked with us to agree the priorities and necessary changes against budget.

The Pheasey team started by carrying out an audit of our school, looking at where we were in terms of supporting the students, their parents and our teachers, while also reducing the workload. By February, the other seven schools in the trust stepped on board and were also audited.

The audit was really just the first step,

providing us with a starting point for discussion. Each school and teacher within our MAT reviewed the audit and reflected on how well they felt we do in these areas.

SHARING INTERNALLY

The audits highlighted the fact that our schools and teachers had varying approaches to sharing their lesson materials; they were often wasting time duplicating preparation and planning. Historically, we channelled a lot of our work through Microsoft Teams, making sharing that much harder. Pheasey helped us to consider utilising the strength of SharePoint. All learning content created by each teacher now links to related resources, presentations and even video recordings of the actual lessons which can be

accessed by each child or parent remotely, making a more streamlined, continuous learning journey.

The Covid-19 pandemic taught us a lot about online education platforms, not only how we use them to support our teaching practice but how they can help us stay connected with students, teachers and parents. Eighteen months on and we're using a highly-effective hybrid approach to teaching in the future.

Another fundamental outcome was realising the importance of continuing professional development (CPD).

It was actually the CPD that was really instrumental in changing our culture; managing the change to our new infrastructure and way of working and ensuring all teachers were optimising the value of our technology and in turn, facilitating excellence.

I would absolutely encourage all schools to work with EdTech demonstrator schools. A focus on collaboration internally and externally is a key factor in improving and maintaining teaching standards; opening our eyes to a greater level of sharing!

Elliott Hateley B.Ed (Hons) L.L.E, executive leader of Hill Avenue Academy, part of the Manor Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

A brave new world

Al Kingsley sets out to make EdTech accessible for everyone, sharing his ideas and experiences from 30 years in the sector

Primary school teachers have had to be creative to keep education moving over the last

18 months – and the key enabler everyone has turned to is technology. When the pandemic struck, we were fortunate to be in the position of having consumer technology use embedded into our everyday lives. Our existing ‘soft’ technology skills (using phones, smart household devices and so on) helped us all to adapt to remote situations quickly when there was no other choice.

Step change

Of course, switching to remote learning was a seismic shift in terms of education delivery and something that few primary schools had even tested before the first lockdown. We know (and greatly appreciate!) the Herculean efforts teachers made to fast-track their technology skills to make the best of the unfamiliar situation and ensure some kind of continuity for their pupils.

This mass increase in teachers’ EdTech use has proved to be a defining moment; there’s no going back to exactly how things were before. Yet, while schools expected staff to advance their digital skills, the professional development they supplied understandably focused on the use of the specific tools needed there and then. For some teachers, this was a catalyst to further independent learning about solutions and ideas that they could apply to their practice – but for others, even now, the EdTech discussion in their school is still seen as something that they are simply not involved in. But why? We feel connected to consumer technology – why is the attitude different for EdTech?

You are part of this

Looking at EdTech through a wider lens means that we needn’t confine our EdTech thinking to classroom teaching and learning. There are so many ways that using technology in a primary school can help teachers in a practical sense, whether it’s to save time, assess pupils, improve communication with parents and colleagues, boost wellbeing and more.

The way to maintain the momentum of current increased EdTech use is for schools to ensure the discussions and opportunities

around educational technology are open to everybody. This empowers all staff to have a voice, be aware of some of the potential opportunities that their school could be engaging in and importantly, be able to challenge suggestions as they work towards the best outcomes.

“It’s vital to equip teachers with the resources and skills that will help them confidently teach diversity in the curriculum and usualise it as a subject for children.”

Capitalising on greater EdTech use

Until now, teachers have been fire-fighting and schools simply haven’t had a chance to reflect on what future EdTech direction to take or indeed, properly investigate what other solutions could bring positive gains to their context. These aren’t decisions that should be made solely by school leaders;

their experience is vastly different from that of the teachers in the classroom. Hearing views and ideas on EdTech use from different perspectives is vital as part of a whole-school approach – and learning more about EdTech (even in a non-teaching context) is important so that teachers can be aware of the choices they have, the impact on their workloads, the questions they need to ask, and what the best practice is.

By hearing experiences from schools around the world we can learn, avoid the pitfalls and make the right decisions about the solutions that will have a long-term impact, become embedded and deliver for teachers by reducing workloads and streamlining teaching and learning.

Primary teachers are one of the vital voices in this conversation – now is an ideal time to engage, ride the technology wave and be involved in shaping the future of primary education with the judicious application of EdTech. There are no boundaries to education technology: everyone in the school can and should be involved!

Al Kingsley, Group CEO of NetSupport Ltd, an internationally acclaimed EdTech vendor, and author of My #Secret EdTech Diary published by John Catt Educational



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SUBMIT

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Let your school speak for itself

Gina Bailey explains the benefits of making a video prospectus

As a believer in taking a child-centred approach to teaching, I wanted to showcase the schools through the voices of our children.

With the coronavirus pandemic effectively stopping the parents of prospective pupils from visiting St James' C of E Primary and William Martin C of E Schools and Nursery, I was determined to find a way to show the schools at their best in as interactive a way as possible. Filming a prospectus video therefore seemed like a natural progression.

We had recently hired a professional photographer to update the images on our websites and were so impressed with the results that taking it a step further with a video was an easy decision to make. I'd worked with the filming company in my previous school and knew that they'd be able to deliver my vision for the videos without any problems.

The arrival of the camera crew brought with it much excitement and anticipation. In the knowledge that new Covid-19 restrictions could come into place before we'd had the chance to complete the filming, all the staff and pupils were keen to get the ball rolling and let the interviews commence. All of the staff had been briefed beforehand and had written individual scripts detailing what they wanted to say.

VALUES

One half of the film crew explored the school grounds, filming the children as they enjoyed a wide range of classroom activities together. The children were particularly excited to watch the drone camera flying above the schools. A member of staff spent the whole day shadowing the crew, making sure that all of the scenes they were filming were reflective of the values and ethos that the schools, and the community, take great pride in.

The other half of the camera crew set up their own 'interview station' in the main hall, where they spoke to pupils and staff about why they love being a part of the schools' community. I felt it was really important to speak to pupils from a wide range of age groups; hearing both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils share their unique experiences of their teaching and learning was a very special moment, as it allowed us to realise just how much our children grow in confidence during such a short space of time.

Since the prospectus videos first went live

"The arrival of the camera crew brought with it much excitement and anticipation."

on the website, we have had a wave of positive feedback from the parents of prospective pupils, who commented that being able to explore both schools through the videos and voices of the children made them feel like a real part of the school's close community. With many other local schools pursuing award titles in order to promote their teaching, I felt that letting the educational merits of our school's speak for themselves through the voices of our children was far more valuable.

IMPRESSED

Filming the prospectus videos has been a memorable experience for both our staff and

our pupils, and I'm so pleased that the rest of the community were just as impressed with the final result as we were. Given the ever-changing nature of the Government's Covid-19 guidance for schools, those who are finding themselves in a similar situation with regards to a drop in pupil numbers could really benefit from investing in a prospectus video. Not only does it give a voice to your pupils and staff, but it is an incredibly valuable asset that both parents and carers can repeatedly come back to.

It's certainly been a learning experience, for both myself and our children, and it takes a lot of planning beforehand to get it right.

My main piece of advice would be to take your time when choosing a local business to work alongside; look at their body of work and decide who you feel would best represent your community, as it is so important to make sure that your school's message is allowed to shine.

Gina Bailey is headteacher of St James' Church of England Primary School and executive headteacher of William Martin Schools and Nursery



THE IMPORTANCE OF A TRULY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Chris Ansell describes his school's virtual week in China and how they navigated the challenges

At LEO Academy Trust, we see teaching MfL as a key part of not only developing our pupils' language and communication skills but also providing them with the opportunity to understand other ways of living and become more informed, tolerant and cultured global citizens.

A recent Ofsted investigation found that while a wide range of languages is being taught in primary schools, there is a lack of depth in the curriculum. As a Trust, we introduced an innovative approach to teaching languages across our schools in 2018 which saw all Year 4 pupils learn Mandarin virtually. The programme provided a fully-immersive experience to provoke high engagement and give our pupils a deeper knowledge of both language and culture.

We chose Mandarin for several reasons including that it is presumed to be the most spoken first language in the world, with more than one billion people speaking the dialect. This provided a great chance for our pupils to improve their ability to communicate with people on the other side of the world and to understand a different culture. We also felt that living in a modern and diverse world, Mandarin was a good reflection of our student demographic. Finally, China is a growing powerhouse, so by giving our pupils the skills to speak the language and understand the culture, we believe many doors can open for them as they progress into the world of further education and work.

VIRTUALLY

The provision was provided through an online immersive programme and Mandarin lessons were conducted virtually with a Mandarin teacher in Beijing, well before the idea of 'live remote lessons' would become part of everyday life. Our pupils have a great relationship with their teacher, which helps the learning process as they are not afraid to 'have a go'. Lessons are also supported by online resources that can be accessed in school and at home, allowing pupils to follow their interests and be inquisitive. As a result, our pupils have developed their knowledge and learnt many Mandarin phrases, including greetings, numbers, countries, foods, families and hobbies.

As a culmination of their learning, our pupils were due to visit China this year. The trip was to be funded for 60 disadvantaged pupils, with further places available for non-disadvantaged pupils. However, due to Covid-19, we were forced to rethink the trip. We were determined not to cancel the event, and instead, find another way to provide an exciting and immersive experience as we felt it was a crucial part of our pupils' learning experience to speak Mandarin in real-life situations, expand their vocabulary, increase their confidence and deepen their cultural appreciation. This is an important part of our Trust's strategy and ambition for all pupils to have 'Learning, Excellence and Opportunity' and a cultural capital-building experience beyond compare to become active global citizens.

So, we organised the next best thing and held a virtual week in China from the safety of our classroom. We had limited time to organise activities, so we employed a company and signed up for a virtual excursion to Chengdu. This was a great choice as it took the pressure of organising seven days of events in a foreign country off our shoulders - no small feat when we are working to support our pupils through a pandemic.

The materials provided were excellent, offering detailed information booklets, follow-up activities that pupils could complete at home and scripts for teachers to navigate each session. We also had our own host for the live tours. However, as we did not organise the week, it was not specifically tailored to the needs of our pupils, and we did occasionally adjust the timetable so that it allowed our pupils to work most effectively.

All pupils who had been learning Mandarin were invited to take part and it was fantastic to see all our pupils from the four classes reunited and together again for this special experience. This in itself was a highlight of the week - having been separated and learning from home for so long, the children loved being back together and the energy in the classroom was brilliant.



“I recommend to any school planning something similar to create as many opportunities as possible for pupils to speak with their counterparts.”

ACTIVITIES

Throughout our virtual visit to Chengdu, pupils enjoyed a series of amazing activities designed to practice and improve their language skills and develop their knowledge of China's history, culture and identity. We had informative sessions in the morning and practical activities in the afternoon.

The morning sessions included virtually exploring Downton Chengdu and the Hejiang Pavilion, learning about the ancient Chu civilisation, visiting the Sanxingdui Museum and of course, the Chengdu Giant Panda centre was a hit with the children. These sessions were incredibly interesting but taking part remotely was challenging. Had we been there in person, our pupils could have led their learning and explored the attractions themselves and it was difficult for some pupils to stay seated for long periods. To combat this, if the children were restless, we would step away from the itinerary for 15 minutes and pupils would work on a presentation of what we had learned. This gave them a chance to move around, talk with friends and carry out practical work.

Our pupils particularly thrived during the practical afternoon activities and loved having a go at Chinese calligraphy, Chinese cooking, Kung Fu and making lanterns for the Chinese New Year. We were fortunate that our pupils could try a range of Chinese food each lunch break and they were very excited to learn how to use chopsticks, open their fortune cookies and try new flavours. These activities encompassed our goal of an immersive experience and our pupils flourished as a result. They were highly engaged and

receptive to using what they had learnt in practice and excited for more.

We also had the chance to tour our sister school in Chengdu and speak with the pupils there. For me, this was the most valuable part of the week. It gave our pupils the autonomy to lead their learning, connect with pupils their age and use their language skills to ask questions that genuinely interested them, from learning about the Chinese school day to what pets they had and which football team they supported. I recommend to any school planning something similar to create as many opportunities as possible for pupils to speak with their counterparts.

We are looking forward to seeing the long-term impact. However, one thing I can say is the immersive experience was fantastic for reigniting our pupils' love for learning and Mandarin. After many months in and out of lockdowns, the effect of siloed learning was taking its toll, so to be able to step away from the screens and have a fully immersive experience and a buzzing classroom full of pupils excited to be together and learn together was priceless. After all, learning is better together.

OPPORTUNITY

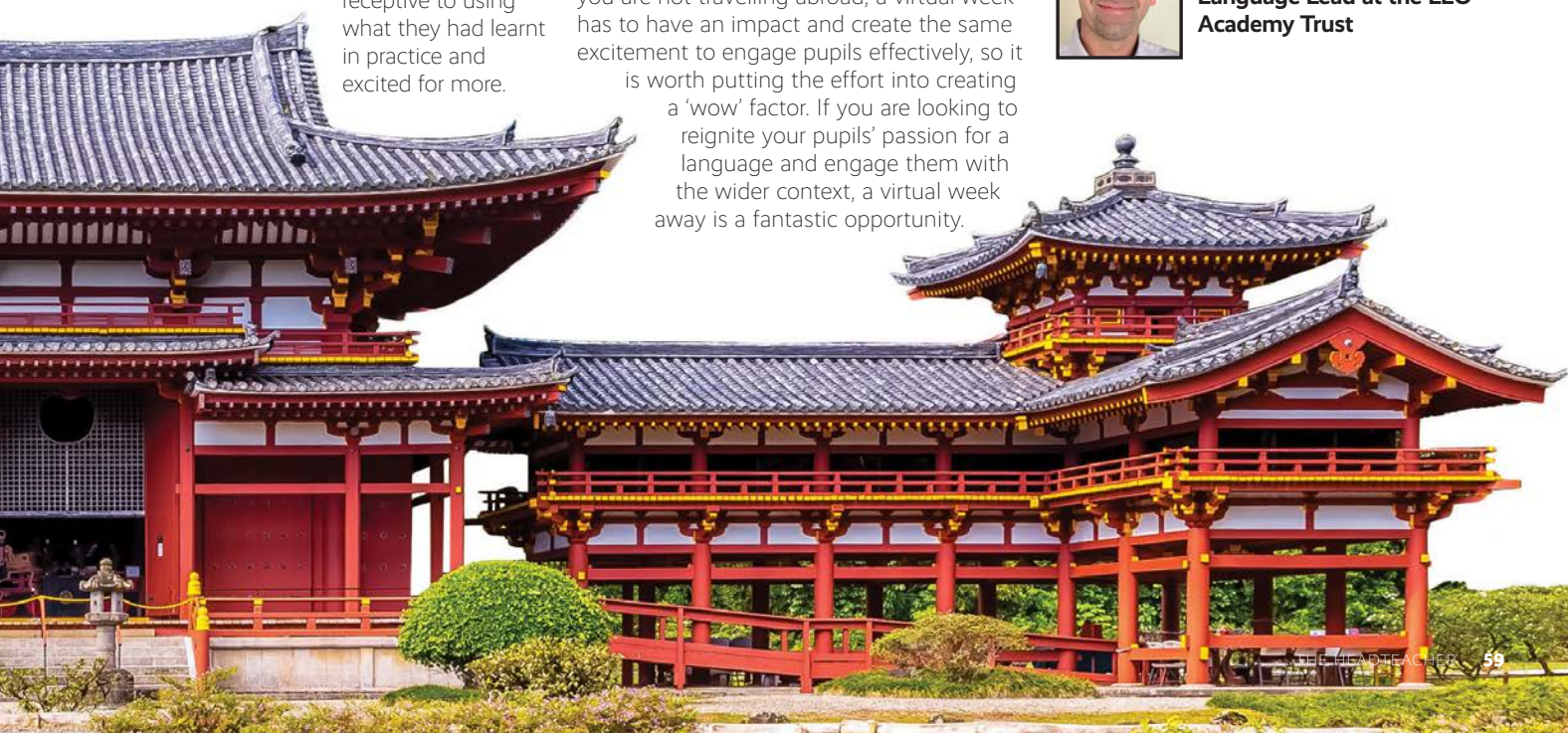
For other schools looking to hold a virtual event, I recommend using a company to plan your itinerary but do not be afraid to adapt it to suit your pupils' learning needs. For the benefits to be realised, the experience has to be genuinely immersive. Our pupils ate, lived and breathed the culture, we decorated the classrooms, and we took part in many cultural activities. If you are not travelling abroad, a virtual week has to have an impact and create the same excitement to engage pupils effectively, so it is worth putting the effort into creating a 'wow' factor. If you are looking to reignite your pupils' passion for a language and engage them with the wider context, a virtual week away is a fantastic opportunity.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Bring the culture to life** – virtual trips abroad are a brilliant way to help pupils live and breathe the culture and language of a new country, regardless of travel restrictions or budget constraints. To help pupils truly engage and immerse themselves in an exciting new place, try decorating the classroom, bringing in native dishes and planning practical cultural activities to help generate excitement and engagement.
- **Virtual excursions** – choose a company to help create your virtual trip and ensure that fun and interactive opportunities are at the heart of each day. They can develop a full itinerary with exciting activities and virtual excursions to give pupils a 'real-life' learning experience.
- **Connect with a teacher abroad** – if possible, working with a teacher from the country to deliver live, virtual lessons is a great way to help children enrich their understanding of the language, expand their vocabulary and develop their listening and oral skills.



Chris Ansell, Mandarin Language Lead at the LEO Academy Trust



MAKING THE LEAP TO DIGITAL LEARNING

Abdul Chohan explains how to utilise hybrid learning to enhance education post Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown restrictions by the UK government has led to most business sector leaders re-evaluating their attitudes towards remote working, and this is no less true for schools.

When schools shut to most pupils in March of 2020, education leaders were forced to rapidly find a solution to the problem of delivering lessons to most of their learners through a computer screen. While this was no easy feat, especially at such short notice, most school's adaption to remote lessons has been extremely effective and has resulted in opening the eyes of teachers and senior leaders alike to the benefits that technology can have for learning in both the short and long-term.

However, as we look ahead to the new academic year, and the end of Covid-19 restrictions, what role does hybrid learning play in the classroom and is it here to stay?

HYBRID LEARNING

Hybrid learning can be achieved in a range of different ways and can be tailored to the needs of a school and its pupils.

Adopting methods of hybrid learning can help schools break free from a 'one size fits all' mentality to learning and embrace alternative practices that can offer support to pupils in new ways. Teachers will also be given the opportunity to encourage their pupils to be more independent with their learning and find what method suits each child best.

However, when schools made the original switch from classroom to virtual learning most did not have a designated digital platform for online lessons and therefore had to rely on mainstream technology platforms that were built for the workplace and not a classroom. Although many schools adapted well to these platforms, the full benefits of digital education were unlikely to be realised when using software created to facilitate workplace conference calls and co-worker communication.

When considering the integration of technology into a long-term strategy, schools should consider those platforms that don't simply facilitate virtual learning, but also provide a whole range of other benefits for

both pupils and staff including delivering personalised feedback, engaging parents, and providing opportunities to assess and support any gaps in learning. It is these education-specific features and real-time tools that can really enhance a school's hybrid learning approach and add value to teaching and learning. More often than not, the right tools will also enable teachers to tailor content towards pupils of different age groups, abilities and functionality designed to support more specific needs, including those children with SEND.

IMPROVING FEEDBACK

One of the main benefits of hybrid learning is the introduction of varied ways of providing feedback and instruction to pupils. During the lockdown, teachers used different methods to update pupils on their class progression or to set a task, often involving written emails or via a homework app. However, one method that has proved particularly effective is through voice notes that can be sent directly to pupils. Voice notes allow teachers to deliver verbal instructions or feedback to pupils in a way that resonates with them, and also supports those who might be less confident with reading or who struggle to write clearly, ensuring that they can access these when needed.

“Hybrid learning can be achieved in a range of different ways and can be tailored to the needs of a school and its pupils.”



Furthermore, voice notes can help teachers better convey their tone when giving feedback and reduce the risk of a pupil misinterpreting their notes. Unlike verbal in-person feedback, a child or parent can refer to the audio clip at a later date in order to pinpoint the advice given by the teacher over ways to improve their work or for revision purposes.

ASSISTING WITH TEACHER WORKLOADS

A common problem that many teachers have to deal with is over-burdened workloads, with most of the school day dedicated to teaching lessons there is little time to complete the additional tasks of lesson planning and marking. This leads to most teachers using their personal time to catch up on tasks that can take a considerable amount of time. This is where hybrid learning can be used to ensure the burden of administration and other time-consuming tasks are lifted, and teachers time can be used to do what they do best, teach. For example, it can help to eliminate more time intensive jobs such as marking so that teachers can keep their focus on providing constructive feedback and planning engaging lessons.

Virtual platforms can be a great help in making marking processes much

more efficient by automatically identifying incorrect answers. They can also make it a lot easier to compare pupils' previous performances and track their progress so they can identify a pupil's gap in knowledge. Furthermore, when using technology teachers can easily set assignments and pop quizzes that are tailored to each child's knowledge level or weakness area that can be extremely beneficial and time-saving for classrooms of pupils with mixed abilities.

IMPROVE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Hybrid learning can also help to improve parental engagement; by implementing EdTech platforms which provide parents with their own login, this enables them to assess their child's portfolio and the progression they are making. It can also be a great way for schools to encourage frequent engagement between teachers and parents, especially when it comes to parents' evenings, as being able to meet virtually can make it possible to fit around conflicting schedules. Additionally, parents can address any issues with their child's teacher, or vice versa, almost immediately instead of waiting for an in-person meeting – helping to reduce concerns or ensure appropriate interventions are put in place swiftly.

Finding ways to bolster parents' involvement in their child's education is incredibly important as parental engagement has been proven to significantly impact a child's chance of progress and attainment.

THE NEED FOR GREATER DIGITAL LITERACY

Finally, EdTech is becoming increasingly crucial as we are already seeing a rise in demand for digital skills and a corresponding emerging deficit in digitally-trained employees. In the future, it is likely to become critical for those entering the job market to be technology-literate in order to obtain employment. Therefore, a school's investment in hybrid learning will become an investment in its

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **Choose the right technology – It is important you find a platform that works for you and your school's needs, you can ask for a consultation with most EdTech companies giving you the opportunity to try before you buy.**
- **Develop a digital strategy – hybrid learning will look different for every school, as it needs to complement the specific needs of your learning environment. Before you embark on this path, map out what you want from your experience.**
- **Provide your staff with training – many EdTech organisations will provide training on how to use their platforms, so make sure to make the most of this. EdTech is meant to make learning and teaching processes easier, but without training it runs the risk of having the opposite effect.**
- **Utilise technology to engage parents – it's so important that parents are involved in their child's education and classroom technology has the ability to make it easier than ever before.**

pupils' future prospects, enabling pupils from a young age to become familiar with the technology that will help set them up for future success. Exposing pupils to classroom technologies as part of their daily routine from a young age builds a fluency that would be hard to achieve otherwise.

In general, technology has been widely embraced in a range of different aspects of society as a way to improve upon outdated processes in order to make them more efficient and effective. While education had been lagging in this regard, it appears as if the pandemic and the move to remote learning has been the digital push that schools have needed to make the final leap.



Abdul Chohan, VP of learning at Showbie and former CEO of a Multi-Academy Trust

5 REASONS TO TRY... NAHT Discovery Education Pathway

Empower your staff to examine what motivates and demotivates them



30 SECOND BRIEFING

NAHT Discovery Education Pathway is an online programme of professional and personal development for educators today. Comprised of multiple courses and self-investment tools, Pathway helps educators build an ongoing professional learning journal.

1 BRING DIRECTION AND PURPOSE TO APPRAISALS

Pathway offers a range of self-management tools that enable each individual to audit their skills, manage their health and wellbeing, create a motivation plan and set their career ambitions for the years ahead. These self-direction tools bring more meaning and purpose to performance management reviews and appraisals, helping leaders provide targeted support and direction for every teacher in their school. Once teachers have 'set their professional compass', Pathway offers a suite of CPD courses to help them reach their professional goals, making appraisals more targeted and more impactful over time.

2 A PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE

Pathway offers individual logins and multiple courses for teachers. This means that several colleagues can choose to work through the same course whilst recording and saving their own individual answers to the questions for reflection built into every unit within each course. When colleagues work on parallel Pathway courses, they are able to share their thoughts and reflections in regular discussions – operating just like a book club! Pathway provides both the context and the script for a meaningful, professional dialogue in your staff room.



3 INVEST IN YOUR STAFF

The craft of teaching requires all of you, so it seems only right that all of you is supported in the job – not just your professional skills but your personal development too. Pathway includes courses on: managing your motivation; understanding wellbeing and critical reflection; building professional resilience; time management and self-organisation; and many more. Professional skills are blended with self-directed activities and projects designed to develop self-awareness and self-regulation.

4 A PACE TO SUIT YOU

Pathway is comprised of multiple courses and services, all accessed online and bookmarked so that you can return to them whenever you like. Being online, means that each teacher can progress through each Pathway course at a time and pace to suit them – without the need to arrange cover for the day and drive up the motorway to an in-person course! 'Little and often' is

our advice: educators are busy people, so we have divided each course into bitesize chunks, including short films, reading pieces and coaching questions. These all combine to build an ongoing journal of professional reflections.

5 DEVELOP REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Throughout all of our Pathway courses we offer 'questions for reflection'. These do not demand right or wrong answers and you will not be scored on your efforts! Rather, they invite you to consider what you have seen and heard in each Pathway course and to write down what you think and how you feel about it.

Contact:

www.discoveryeducation.co.uk/pathway
0800 6527527



PATHWAY

KEY POINTS

Empower your staff to examine what motivates and demotivates them. Help them to create their own Motivation Plan so they can stay energised at school.

Ensure your CPD in school is targeted and tailored to meet the individual needs and ambitions of your staff, using our skills audits and career mapping tools.

Invest in your staff's wellbeing, with courses on the nature of critical reflection and how to traverse the emotional landscape.

Access Pathway online with individual logins and bookmarks so that your teachers can return to any course wherever and whenever it suits them.

Children need to thrive online

Caroline Allams gives her advice about online safety in schools

In all other facets of child development where there is potential risk, children are provided with the skills and knowledge to prevent pitfalls. Examples include swimming independently, riding a bike and crossing the road. However, when it comes to screens, children are exploring the internet without structured guidance. Whose idea was it to just 'let' children go online?

We have seen the release of new legislation formalising online safety instruction. But the problem we find is the infrequency of online behaviour signposting. Historically, online safety in schools has been taught for only very short periods, or is an exclusive topic that is outsourced and very specific, for example a one-off assembly about 'online stranger danger'.

During four years of research at Natterhub, we found there was a disconnect between the skills pupils were taught at school and the exposure they were having at home living with technology. There was also a disconnect between what parents' thought was happening and what children were actually doing. We found that while children can cope with the functionality of technology, they don't always have the emotional skills to manage the interactivity, nor are they aware of the digital footprint they leave behind.

LOCKDOWN

During the lockdown period statistics around online vulnerability soared, self-generated imagery rocketed and media stories about grooming, child sex abuse images, inappropriate content and cyberbullying became frequent.

However, few teachers had the green light, nor the capacity to provide a digital literacy program of study. Children were being asked to spend more time on

screens than ever, without any guidance around the potential risk nor the skills to navigate an environment that was never designed for them.

PREVALENCE OF THE PROBLEM

With many positives of using screens, such as making friends and checking in with family, it's easy to forget the potential risk for young people who find it difficult to perceive danger in this space. Screens make it easy for us to create poor habits and hard for us to validate content.

- 75 per cent of ten–11-year-olds have shared an image online despite the age restrictions in place for social media platforms.
- 50 per cent of ten–11-year-olds have posted something they later regretted online.
- 32 per cent of seven–nine-year-olds said they would 'sort it out' themselves if they were being bullied online.

On the topic of cyberbullying, we know that 76 per cent of ten–11-year-olds know someone who has been trolled and an alarming 91 per cent of eight–ten-year-olds have seen nasty comments online.

In a lesson on the differences between digital and face-to-face communication, we noted that over 70 per cent of pupils aged seven–11 said that the best way to communicate with friends is via a screen and only 23 per cent chose a face-to-face option.

Fifty per cent of ten–11-year-olds have a device in their bedroom overnight. Recent reports in the media say that the average age a child plays outside with friends unsupervised has risen to 11 years old, but 50 per cent have unsupervised access to the internet with all the content it holds, in their bedroom.

The internet can be an unhappy place for even very young children as

59 per cent of children have felt worried online and 81 per cent have received an unkind comment.

VULNERABLE

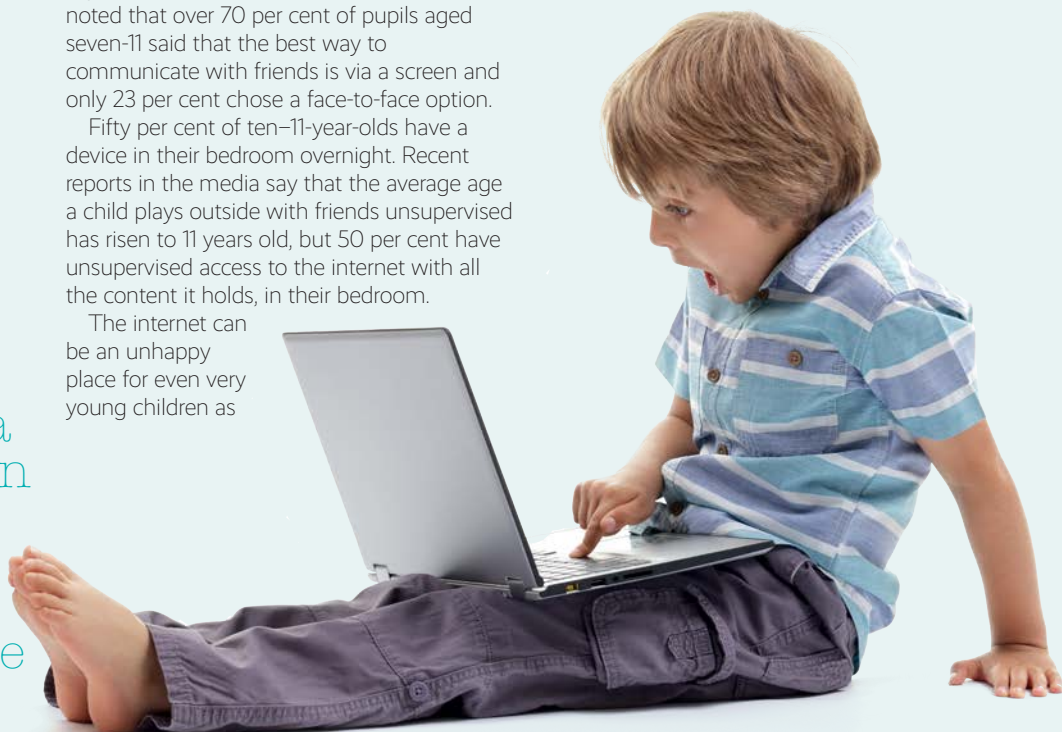
The acceleration of mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic, correlate with online vulnerability too - we know that vulnerable children offline have greater susceptibility to being vulnerable online.

But this doesn't go far enough - it is not enough to simply be 'safe online'. Children have a right to thrive in this space where so much of their childhood is spent. The arrival of the RSE as a compulsory subject is promising but is this enough now, post pandemic? With the soaring screen-related concerns and the shift in pedagogy towards screen-based learning, media literacy ought to be at the centre of every modern school curriculum.

The online interactions of our youngest children matter deeply - these primary stages are the years that children embark on their digital journey and begin to form their screen habits. Our data reveals much about their online experiences.

Caroline Allams, co-founder of Natterhub, an educational social media platform created to prepare primary school children to thrive online.

“There was also a disconnect between what parents' thought was happening and what children were actually doing.”



BEWARE THE ONLINE BULLIES

Colin Stitt explains why we have to educate and access the right tools to combat cyberbullying

During my time as Head of Service and Safer Schools at Ineqe Safeguarding Group, I have seen many changes in how the internet has been used. Not least in the past year as an essential tool for education. One major change I have noted is not just how the online world is being used, but by whom.

The pandemic has been for the internet what a wet day is for umbrella sales. Suddenly everyone wants to be online, and when I say everyone, I mean everyone.

No longer is the internet a place for just adults and teenagers. As much as it might scare us, the reality is that younger children are accessing online spaces and places. According to OFCOM, the age of ten is the new age of digital independence. So, while we may shake our heads in disbelief as we recall childhood days spent outdoors playing with the neighbourhood kids and amusing ourselves with whatever we could find, the harsh reality is that 'things have changed' – and I feel very old for having said that!

Whether via gaming consoles, family members' phones, tablets, or devices given to them by parents, younger users are making their way into the heavy traffic on the information superhighway.

Merging into the internet fast lane comes with a myriad of new issues regarding online safety and raises a lot of safeguarding questions. While we often focus on the predatory behaviour of some adults, we mustn't take our eye off the online issue that is most likely to negatively impact on the young and vulnerable, online bullying. It's a very real and growing problem among primary school-aged children.

TROLLING

Online bullying, or cyberbullying, is the use of electronic communication to bully a person. It can happen on social media sites, via gaming consoles or through messaging apps. It includes trolling, mobbing, stalking or any form of abuse online. It could be threatening messages on Facebook, trolling on TikTok or stalking on Snapchat.

Although it's easy to consider online bullying as something that happens 'beyond the school gates', research found that nearly three out of four children (72 per

cent) who had experienced online bullying experienced at least some of it at school or during school time.

By the time we close the classroom door at the end of the day and reopen it in the morning, there can be a whole world of activity that happened. Friendship's form and dissolve, memes and mean words exchanged alike. Games played, strangers encountered, and accessibility to the whole wide world accessed – the good, the bad and the bullies calling people ugly.

As more children have access to online devices, teachers and educational staff are being presented with a new problem: not only can a bully access a victim on the school grounds and in the classroom, but now they have access to them on an almost unlimited basis. Victims of bullying are now faced with their bullies both at school and at home through the devices they use for fun.

I am perhaps once again showing my age, but I didn't grow up with mobile phones and online games and so it's hard to imagine how that 'accessibility' might have impacted me had a bully made me their online and offline target. The majority of us will have been introduced to social media when we were already adults. Our experiences of trolls and online bullies will therefore be very different as, should we encounter them, we are better equipped to deal with them. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the children in our care.

PLATFORMS

The impacts of bullying on children are well documented. The psychological side effects include low self-esteem, depression and anxiety. Children can feel socially isolated, which due to Covid-19 and learning-from-home could be compounded. Bullying can also affect a child's attendance at school and their academic performance.

The online world for children comes with a lot of pressure. Not only is it important to have social media to feel 'in the know' with what's happening but these platforms are used to forge friendships. Then there's other pressures beyond my own ancient understanding, like maintaining a Snapchat streak or aiming for a viral TikTok video.

For the generations like mine that didn't grow up online and even the youngest of our readers who may be social-media adverse, it may be difficult to understand how integral that world is.

Although many platforms and apps have age restrictions and don't allow users under a certain age, at Ineqe Safeguarding Group our online safety experts' have



“The online world for children comes with a lot of pressure.”

discovered many apps and websites that have limited or no verification process.

Of course, many pupils will have also ‘added’ each other to friends lists in apps, on consoles and swapped mobile numbers or usernames. Even if privacy settings are set up to block messages from strangers, those on the friend lists can still communicate. It is easily assumed by some parents that cyberbullying is prevented by blocking strangers from sending anonymous messages and although that is an effective safeguarding measure that we recommend, it is oftentimes the other children they know from school who are doing the bullying.

Sometimes the messages will be anonymous and the child who is receiving the messages won’t know who is sending them. The anonymity of the messages can be extremely frightening for the child and cause them to feel anxious and mistrusting of those around them. If you suspected someone in

your class was sending you nasty messages but didn’t know who, it would be difficult to feel safe at school.

MESSAGES

As with all other kinds of bullying, for children it’s often much more complicated than simply advising they ‘block and delete’ – perhaps the virtual version of ‘ignore them and walk away’. As adults, it will be easier for us to close down Facebook or Twitter and ignore the ‘trolls’. It’s also a lot more unlikely that those trolls will be our friends or colleagues (I hope!). Children will have to face their bullies in class the next day.

Many children will also choose not to block a bully because they will then have no way of knowing what is being said about them behind their backs. Reading the horrible messages is better than being left to imagine what they say.

Whether we see the bullying happen right in front of us in the classroom or hear about it occurring online, the responsibility and reaction should be the same. Bullying shouldn’t be a part of anyone’s childhood or overlooked by professionals. All children have the right to be safe, respected, and to live free from violence and discrimination.

How we approach bullying needs an update. The differences between verbal or physical bullying and how to tell a teacher is all still vitally important, but the online world has added new complexities.

It is paramount that we educate and empower our children. We can do this through supporting them to use their voice and giving them the tools to speak up and act.

As technology evolves, so too should our approach on how to tackle the new challenges it

HOW TO TACKLE ONLINE BULLYING

- **Teach students about cyberbullying and the different forms it can take online.**
- **Talk about trusted adults and who they might be. You can find resources including lesson plans at <https://ineqe.com/2021/02/08/trusted-adults/>**
- **Provide effective staff training, like recognising the signs that a child may be being bullied, online or offline.**
- **Create safe environments in which children feel safe to speak about any issues they may be facing.**
- **Encourage the practice of kindness online and offline.**
- **Make sure any disciplinary procedures are updated to include any sanctions that may be needed specific to online bullying.**
- **Keep updated with the latest news and safeguarding concerns. Keeping in the loop will leave you better prepared to deal with any problems that could arise.**
- **Access Safer Schools’ free tools to equip you with the resources to reduce bullying. Find Online Bullying Lessons in Teach Hub (<https://oursaferschools.co.uk/teachhub/>) and our Safety Centre (<https://www.oursafetycentre.co.uk/>).**

presents us. These new challenges may look overwhelming from afar but by educating yourself and accessing the right tools and resources, they can be overcome. Now I’m off to grumble something about ‘back in my day...’

Colin Stitt is the Head of Service and Safer Schools at Ineqe Safeguarding Group. Safer Schools is a partnership between Zurich Municipal and Ineqe Safeguarding Group. It provides one out of two schools in the UK insured by Zurich Municipal with access to a customised version of the award-winning Safer Schools App, resources, and training at no additional cost. Learn more at oursaferschools.co.uk



Ben Whitaker takes a look at a year in EdTech and supporting teachers and pupils post-lockdown

It's clear that something of an overnight revolution in education took place, as schools around the world continue to utilise educational technology post-lockdown. Although most of us are internally weary of the phrase 'new normal', it does admittedly point to a valuable idea – how can we capitalise upon the momentum of the past year, and convert it into tangible progression? Which elements of EdTech will be worth carrying over into our new, hybrid way of school life, and how might they help address inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic?

Technological interventions can help quickly gauge each individual learner's aptitude and

Now that children in the UK are back in the classroom, assessment tools will play an integral role in the national educational recovery from school closures. Teachers can only provide targeted 'catch-up' interventions if they are fully aware of where knowledge gaps might exist.

Navigating classroom management can be challenging at the best of times, but keeping students motivated remotely presents even more difficulties. There are a plethora of distractions just a touch of a button away, which continue to persist when physically learning in school using a computer or personal laptop. Teachers face the struggle of

Monitoring software programmes can help teachers quickly check if attention spans have waned through scanning activities, applications and websites in real time in order to keep pupils focussed and on task. In more

[illegible]

disruptive classes or if something needs to be urgently communicated, teachers can even lock the entire group's screens.

Robust digital monitoring is also a key part of ensuring pupils are not only staying on task, but staying safe. Troubling statistics have revealed that 75 per cent of social media in the UK uses an algorithm which routinely introduces strangers to children, such as Facebook's 'People you may know' feature or Snapchat's 'Quick add' tool. With a further 74 per cent of children reporting that they had seen something harmful online, it is crucial that school infrastructures can provide a safe place for children through shielding them from unsuitable content. One way to do this is specifying 'allowed' and 'restricted' websites and applications, to ensure that when children are in school they are only accessing lesson-related materials.

CONTINUITY

While instances of isolation have certainly reduced, they are yet to be eliminated altogether. With the possibility of Covid-19 transmission still on the horizon, children and teachers alike must remain mindful. Whenever

pupils or staff might need to self-isolate, cloud-based learning platforms can help deliver high-quality learning experiences, no matter if participants are in or out of the classroom. Equipping teachers with the option to seamlessly switch between in-class and remote learning provides vital continuity and helps to minimise

disruption wherever possible.

Moreover, looking beyond the pandemic, it seems extremely likely that blended learning in some form is here to stay – whether it's to help learners with additional needs who benefit from a quieter environment, or even to overcome barriers to attending physical school such as traffic or public transport issues on 'snow days'.

TEACHER AND PUPIL WELLBEING

It is no secret that the stress of living and working throughout a pandemic has been a universally challenging experience. However, this is even truer for teachers and school staff, who faced systemic issues with concerns around workload, work-life balance and wellbeing even before the onset of Covid-19. A recent survey conducted by NASUWT found that almost three in ten teachers (27 per cent) reported needing to see a doctor or medical professional to help with the detrimental impact of the pandemic on their mental and physical health. Earlier research by The Guardian revealed high levels of anxiety, exhaustion and fear – triggering many to consider quitting the profession altogether.

All (good) EdTech, now more than ever, should be designed with the needs of our educators in mind. Any learning technology that does not relieve the burden from already stretched teachers is failing to adapt to these fast-paced times. At Bury Grammar School our teacher feedback for our EdTech platform of choice has been overwhelmingly positive, with staff commenting on how intuitive and easy it is to use. Through a combination of its assessment, tracking, classroom management and continuity features, the platform frees up valuable time for teachers to do what they do best: teach.

In a similar vein, it's equally important to prioritise the mental and emotional wellbeing of pupils, who have endured huge levels of instability and uncertainty over the last year. As many as one in six young people are now estimated to have a mental health problem, and while extra government funding has been allocated to address the growing crisis, shorter term solutions are also necessary.

For example, classroom.cloud allows students who might be more self-conscious about speaking in front

GET THE MOST OUT OF EDTECH

- **DIGITAL STRATEGY** – embarking on an edtech development programme is pointless without a robust digital strategy. Do your research and ensure all of your stakeholder needs are properly addressed before falling for the latest gimmick. Free guides (like this one bit.ly/2Vs71Aj) can help you strategise.
- **STAFF CPD** – while many teachers' confidence with tech has hugely improved over the last year, it's key that schools continue to support their teachers through regular CPD.
- **SAFEGUARDING** – all adults working in schools have a legal responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and even more so when some students may have to study from home due to virus exposure.
- **PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT** – all teachers appreciate the importance of gaining parental buy-in and the need to form relationships that are built on trust. Whether it's a virtual letter about a school trip or simply a quick update message, EdTech platforms can help streamline parental communications to boost engagement and keep parents in the loop.

of their peers to ask for help privately. Not only does this reduce feelings of anxiety, but it also empowers them to receive the support they need and meet their goals.

Ultimately, schools have to ensure EdTech works for them and not the other way around. The strongest EdTech platforms and products enhance teaching and learning, and slot seamlessly into the fabric of classroom life and the curriculum. Each school community will serve a different, diverse group of staff and students, and any technology must reflect each unique context.



Ben Whitaker, Head of IT Services at Bury Grammar School

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Learning content for the TikTok generation

Jorge Cauz explores the multi-faceted role supplemental learning can play in the classroom

For many teachers around the world, re-engaging students after multiple school closures and lockdowns is set to be something of an uphill battle. While some children lacked reliable access to digital devices or adequate space in which to study at home, others confronted loss and grief at a young age – and all children have had to cope with the daily turbulence of living through a global pandemic, wherever they live.

With the Education Endowment Foundation finding that much of the progress made in reducing the attainment gap for disadvantaged children may have been reversed throughout lockdown, it's clear that the implications for education could be wide-reaching for generations of children to come. As both pupils and educators alike continue to grapple with this uncertain new landscape, what role might supplemental learning play in practically addressing some of these issues?

ACCURATE CONTENT

It's been hard to avoid conspiracy theories during the pandemic, from 5G and micro-chips in vaccines to lab leaks and hydroxychloroquine. With the overload of Covid-19 related misinformation snowballing so severely that the World Health Organisation described it as an "infodemic", it's more important now than ever to ensure information is accurate and from trusted sources.

"Equally, it's crucial that supplemental learning material be agile and adaptable to each student's unique needs."

As a global knowledge leader that has been synonymous with reliable information since its first publication in 1768, Britannica has been dedicated to helping internet users both in and outside of the classroom to cut through the noise to find verified information. With the plethora of platforms in which curious knowledge seekers "consume" content, we are continuously evaluating the venues in which we need to be present as well as the type of content and experiences that we need to create to fit the specific venue. To this end, we've recently teamed up with YouTube to

create information panels attached to videos and video searches that link to fact-checked background information in a bid to curb the waves of misleading content.

Other initiatives like Britannica Insights (a free Chrome and Firefox browser extension) freely surface Britannica's fact-checked content to the top right of a user's search-results page for easy access to reliable, expert-based information.

But no one is better placed

than teachers to dispel falsehoods, and this can only be achieved if they themselves are equipped with the tools they need to battle this "infodemic". With a 2019 study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute finding that the majority of supplemental learning materials are lacking in quality, it's vital that curriculum-enhancing programmes do just that – enhance, not detract.

ENGAGING AND PERSONALISED SOLUTIONS

Teachers often report feeling pressured to compete for pupils' attention spans, as short, snappy Tweets or TikToks that often distract students from participating in classroom-based tasks or focussing on homework. But some of these platforms provide a great opportunity to fuel curiosity and create need-to-know moments that increase the use of reliable supplemental materials such as Britannica's.

If supplemental material is to stand a chance against 15-second videos or constantly refreshing newsfeeds, it must be just as, if not more, engaging to instil a true love for learning and spark curiosity in children.

Fortunately, short, fun videos can be used effectively to engage students for real learning, as we have found with our successful TikTok series.

Equally, it's crucial that supplemental learning material be agile and adaptable to each student's unique needs. The material must be digestible online, downloadable, even printable for students without access to reliable internet connections, and the content itself must accommodate students with varying reading and comprehension skills. Multimedia, "read aloud tools", and articles offered at various reading levels thus become essential, especially in environments where blended, distance learning, or independent instruction is the norm.

Clearly, supplemental learning is a small, but vital, cog in the wider educational system. As teachers around the world continue to respond to the demands and consequences of the pandemic with remarkable agility and resilience, it should play a key part in educational recovery going forward.

Jorge Cauz, CEO of The Britannica Group (home to Encyclopaedia Britannica)



IS IT TIME TO INVEST IN TRANSPORT?

Godfrey Ryan believes thousands of schools risk being left behind in the digital transport revolution



Technology has played a pivotal role during the pandemic, not least in enabling education providers to continue to teach students remotely. As a result, technology use in schools has been fast tracked, with over 80 per cent of educators agreeing that technology helped them to do a better job in 2020.

Schools have been forced to rely on remote teaching tools and video-conferencing software in order to deliver learning – and investment has reflected this. Interestingly, our research surveying 250 school management staff nationwide, shows that while 61.2 per cent have invested in technology for the classroom over the last ten years, only 22.8 per cent of schools have

invested in technology to manage their school transport in the same time period.

While funding classroom tech is fundamental to school and student development, so too is investing in safer, greener and smarter transport. Taking steps to innovate on the school run will reduce pressure on staff, leading to greater productivity and more time to focus on what children are learning at school, instead of how they are getting there.

Schools that invest in upgrading technology for school transport will differentiate themselves from other schools in the area, while encouraging parents to think about how the school run can be smarter, safer and more sustainable. Encouragingly, there are many forward-

thinking schools that have already made strides in this area, with 38 per cent of schools and 48 per cent of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) planning to invest in this area in the next five years. But, more needs to be done.

So why, and how, does the school run need to change? And what role do innovative technologies have to play in this?

USING TECHNOLOGY TO MAXIMISE STUDENT SAFETY

Unsurprisingly, safety of students has become an increasing priority for staff and parents alike amidst the backdrop of Covid-19. In the wake of using online

“It is evident that safer, smarter school transport can save time and stress for school staff and parents.”

technology to teach, there has been an increased emphasis on safeguarding children online, with 48 per cent prioritising safety online as the top tech objective in schools.

Equally as important is the safety of children travelling to school. Many parents report feeling anxious about their children returning to shared transport and instead are opting to drive their children to school in low-occupancy cars to curb infection fears. In turn, this leads to more cars on the road and dangerous congestion around the school gates, with 52 per cent of parents believing the volume of traffic around school poses a risk to their children's safety. Considering the constant emphasis on safety, organisations that invest in offering transport that eliminates parental concerns will lead the way in the digital transport revolution.

Technology such as the Kura app for parents, sends notifications to parents when their children are boarding and alighting school transport via their swipe on/off tag. In addition, the technology enables parents to track the journey, or cancel or alter arrangements if plans should change. This takes the stress out of the school run and ensures that the safety of students is maximised.

TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The strain on school staff has increased more than ever this year, with additional workloads and time taken to adapt to the technology that enables remote learning and new infection control processes. The safety of students and their ability to learn effectively is of paramount importance but one in six schools (16.8 per cent) still report that staff spend over 11 hours a week organising school transport. When figures are extrapolated, this equates to thousands of hours a week wasted across more than 4,000 schools. More can, and must, be done to reduce the administrative burden and implement management systems that take the pressure off staff.

The hours spent managing the school run would be better placed making up for a year of lost learning. In 2019, 80 per cent of teachers said that their workload was unmanageable and the pandemic has only added to this strain for many. By implementing a smarter school transport system, schools would increase staff productivity and wellbeing, while reducing their workload and contributing to a better

work/life balance. With 40 per cent of staff agreeing that technology is the key to running the school efficiently, it is interesting that research suggests updating tech was the lowest priority last year in comparison to results, attainment gaps and improving teaching methods as top priorities.

SMARTER TRANSPORT TO CHALLENGE COMPETITORS

Independent schools have the added pressure of increased competition for admissions and the need to differentiate from other schools in the area. Covid-19 has made the admissions process more difficult as schools can no longer invite prospective parents to visit and instead are often relying on virtual tours and remote admissions assessments.

More than half (55 per cent) of parents with children at independent schools expressed a need for the school run to be easier and less stressful. When competition is so high, the schools that can ease this burden through smarter travel are more likely to differentiate themselves and offer prospective parents increased incentive to choose them over potential competitors.

In contrast, independent schools that do not update transport in line with others risk falling behind the curve.

Despite the competitive element, independent schools fall behind state and academy schools when it comes to technological investment, with 17.4 per cent of independent schools investing in technology, as opposed to 19 per cent of state schools and 27 per cent of academies.

It is evident that safer, smarter school transport can save time and stress for school staff and parents. Furthermore, if school transport is the most efficient choice for parents, in turn, it means less cars on the road and reduced emissions.

When a quarter of traffic on the roads in rush hour can be attributed to the school run, encouraging the use of school transport is pivotal in both reducing congestion and contributing to cleaner air.

Parents and students are passionate about choosing more environmentally-friendly options, with 53 per cent of parents and 49 per cent of students reporting that they would like their school to be as green as possible.

As a result, greener transport is a further incentive for parents to pick your educational establishment and sustainability

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Wondering where schools have been focusing their technology investments in the last ten years? Here's what we found:

- 61.2 per cent have invested in classroom technology.
- 46.4 per cent in technology solutions to save teachers time on lesson planning.
- 29.6 per cent in technology to improve and speed up back-office school transport processes.
- 22.8 per cent have introduced technology into the school run.
- 20.8 per cent have invested in technology to improve infection control.
- 13.6 per cent in improving school transport technology.

Source; Kura survey of 250 school management staff nationwide

<https://ridekura.com/2021/04/kura-report-on-investing-in-technology-for-school-transport-2021/>

will only become more of an expectation in the future.

Low budgets have consistently proven to be a barrier to technological development with 81 per cent saying that there is not enough budget for tech. However, an agile minority of schools are starting to prioritise smarter school transport, which means that stakeholder expectations in this area will soon rise, and schools that do not meet these heightened expectations will quickly fall behind the curve.

While funding to update school transport may be difficult to obtain, the potential for time saved, increased productivity, higher admissions and happier parents are incentives to make a change.



Godfrey Ryan, CEO of school transport specialist Kura



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Leadership & HR

IS YOUR TEAM TOXIC?

Pam Hamilton explains what to watch out for and how to deal with toxic staff members



The last 18 months have been tough for everyone, and for people working in education especially so. Apart from the concerns over student safety and care, we have been struggling with stress, uncertainty and disruption. For many the crisis has helped us develop new habits and skills, and showed how resilient we can be when we work well together. However, for others, it has highlighted bad behaviours and team conflict. It may be that these were always there and were amplified, or the pandemic threw up new barriers to previously effective team working.

If your team is in conflict, you need to do something about it, as early as possible, or it will get far worse. It is tempting to think that the people we work with are like our families - we can't always choose who they are, we get to know each other well over time, and we sometimes see their worst sides under pressure. The problem is, like families, toxic teams have developed a strong pattern of behaviour, and habits are hard to break - but we need to stop excusing bad behaviour at work.

TOGETHER

In all the research I did for my new book on teamwork, I learned that the best teams behave respectfully towards each other, no matter who they are, no matter how pressured the work is and no matter how senior they are. Everyone has good days and bad days, and we don't always work together as well as we could, but if we can do the best we can to work well together, the work will benefit and it will be more enjoyable too.

How do you know if your team is toxic?

People repeatedly make excuses for each other like "don't mind her, she's always like that", or "ignore him, he doesn't mean it"

"If your team is in conflict, you need to do something about it, as early as possible, or it will get far worse."

- The atmosphere is negative because people are indiscrete, unprofessional or spread gossip about each other
- There's a culture of fear, and no one wants to say anything about it because they don't want to be targeted
- Bullying and bad behaviour are ignored, excused or even encouraged
- People regularly cry at work or shout at each other

RESPONSIBILITY

High performing teams prefer to see themselves like sports teams not families – we are here to win together, which means being our fittest, best version of ourselves, and playing well together. When we do great work we win our games, and we enjoy ourselves too. It's no longer acceptable to just say "that's the way it's always been". Instead, we need to bring our best selves to work, and make sure other people do too.

So how do you fix a toxic team?

1. ASK FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Anyone in the team can say "I'm feeling uncomfortable/unhappy/bad about how we behave at work, could we work on improving it together?"

2. FOCUS ON BEHAVIOUR: Refer to specific behaviours not people. For example, "I'd prefer it if we stopped spreading gossip in the staff room, I feel like it's making us all feel worse".

3. SPEAK UP EARLY: Don't wait for behaviours to repeat or to get worse, say something in the moment, such as "I don't know if you realise you're shouting now and it's making me feel uncomfortable, please talk to me without raising your voice"

4. DO A RESET: As a team, schedule a reset session where everyone shares what they love about working in the team, and what they would like to improve to make the team a more positive place to work. Discuss these and then agree the behaviours that are or are not acceptable moving forward.

5. SEEK SUPPORT: If all your best efforts fail to make the team less toxic, you may need to ask for advice and support from an external expert or trustee.

We all have a responsibility to each other to improve the way we all behave at work. Let's not be a dysfunctional family, let's be a sports teams and play well together – that way we all win.

Pam Hamilton is a teamwork expert and author of *Supercharged Teams: 30 Tools of Great Teamwork*. In chapter eight of *Supercharged Teams* "Dealing With Conflict", there are four tools you can use to help you reset your team. There's also a free team assessment you can use to find out how your team is performing and what chapters and tools are right for you.



WHAT DOES YOUR OFFICE SAY ABOUT YOU?

Make sure the place in school reserved for you alone sends out the right signals, says **Jill Berry**

Earlier in my career, there were a couple of occasions where I had to share an office.

The roles that eventually gave me a room of my own were head of sixth form, deputy head and head. I soon found that the way you arrange your office and how you use it – including how often your door's open or closed – reflects your leadership priorities and how you manage relationships.

A head I knew and respected once said to me, 'Daytime is for people; evenings and weekends are for paper.' That's certainly how it was for me. As a head of sixth form, my office door was open whenever I was in there alone, unless I was negotiating an especially tricky telephone conversation. People would often call in and speak to me – to ask questions, tell me something, share a moan or a joke, and occasionally tears.

INHERITED

Giving time to all this was important to me; the emails and the contents of my in-tray could wait until the end of the day. Upon becoming a deputy, I surveyed the office layout I inherited from my predecessor.

Walking through the door, the working desk was ahead of you with the deputy sat behind it. There was only one other chair in the room, on the opposite side of the desk facing her. I opted to move the working

desk so it was under the window; that way, I could look out into a courtyard area where staff and students tended to circulate. It also meant that if someone came into the office to speak to me, I could turn to face them without the barrier of the desk between us.

I additionally asked for two easy chairs and a low table for a corner of the room, so that when I met with staff, pupils or parents one-to-one we'd be sat next to each other, on comfortable chairs, with a table for our drinks – and occasionally a box of tissues.

INFORMATION

As a head, I sought to arrange my new office in a similar way, with extra chairs for small group meetings. I gave some thought to what I wanted on the walls – artwork and photographs that lifted me and a noticeboard on which were displayed cards I'd received, as well as important information. I've always kept plants in my offices (I like greenery) and fresh flowers.

There would always be fresh fruit too, so that I'd be tempted to nibble at that, rather than the cakes and biscuits that regularly made their way into the staffroom. I further asked to have my name on the door, rather than my title. Think about it – what does your office say about you?

Jill Berry is a leadership consultant, author and former headteacher

Act now to protect our new teachers

Early career teachers may be the focus of big government plans, but school leaders can act now to protect and nurture the future of the profession, says **Kelly McKay** and **Philippa Cordingley**

The launch of the government's Early Career Framework (ECF) at the beginning of 2019 was very much welcomed by the education sector.

It signalled a ramping up of efforts to tackle what is probably the biggest challenge currently facing our schools – the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Over the past decade we have seen countless surveys and research predicting the numbers of teachers who will leave the profession after five years, and the reasons why they will leave.

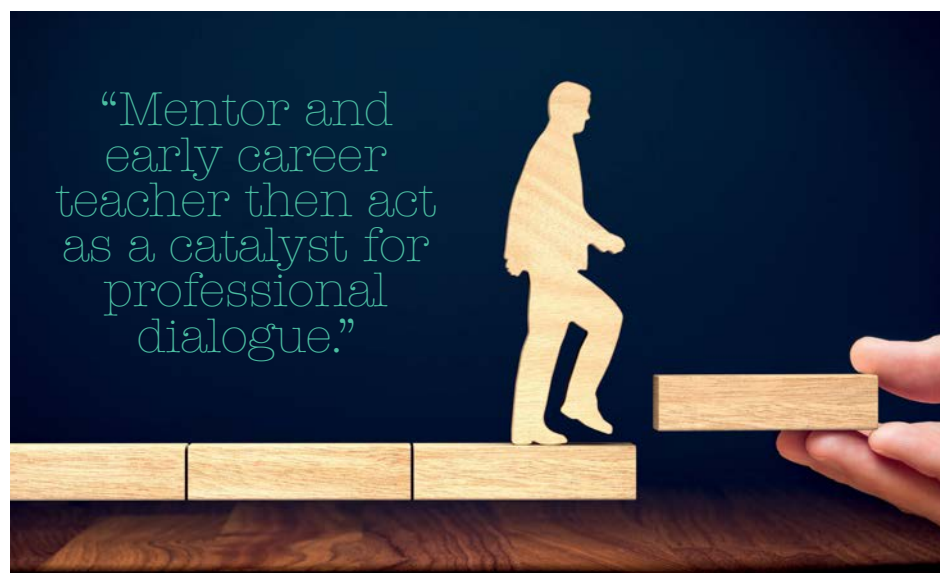
While the ECF is one significant step towards a big transformation in the care and respect given to early career teachers, or ECTs, it will also be down to school leaders to play an active part in that transformation and ensure that, of the 25,000 new teachers that enter the profession each year, the vast majority will still be prospering in our schools five years from now.

MENTORS

There are some win-win ways for schools to begin preparing for this right now. Giving experienced teachers the opportunity to become early career mentors helps to position this important role as a professional skill in its own right, as well as a privilege and a form of deep professional learning. This also acts as a springboard for reviewing your teaching and learning policies in the light of up-to-date evidence from our universities and from the Early Career Framework.

It isn't just the benefits of mentoring that are under-estimated. The skills involved in providing the kind of support to new teachers which works in the long term as well as the short term are often overlooked too. High quality development and support for these mentors is crucial. We should make it possible for ECTs and their mentors to carry out, learn from and respond to research in a structured, efficient way which flags up the most up-to-date, relevant research summaries and resources. Equipped with this knowledge, they can quickly and accurately identify the implications for their pupils and context.

Mentors need to be great brokers too, understanding how and where they and their ECTs can find a range of expertise as their professional horizons expand and



expectations of what they can contribute become increasingly ambitious.

Roger Purdy, Director of Teaching School at St Bedes Teaching School Alliance in County Durham, says that mentors of early career teachers need time to consider their role and develop knowledge of the science of learning because they are highly influential in shaping the careers of new teachers.

The St Bedes approach is to give its mentors a good grounding in the theory behind effective learning, based on the latest research, and also how this theory is simplified into classroom practice and pedagogy. Mentor and early career teacher then act as a catalyst for professional dialogue.

It's also for school leaders to build systems that make the development and support of teachers an intrinsic part of their school improvement function. For example, the Archdiocese of Liverpool Primary School Improvement Trust (ALPSIT) – an organisation that provides school support services to 185 primary schools across eight local authorities in the North West – has created a new talent management matrix. It's a tool to help heads check that new teachers get the development and support they need to fulfil their potential. It's also a way for ALPSIT to hold schools to account for the development of their staff.

VALUABLE

These are good examples of the practical measures groups of schools can take to

create the right conditions for early career teachers to prosper. But there should also be a revolution in the way newly qualified teachers are viewed. They need to be seen as a valuable asset to their schools, who can gain from seeing the profession, policies and practices through a fresh pair of eyes, especially ones informed by the latest research.

Schools can achieve this through seeking out information from newly qualified teachers about what they have learned about or are learning from recent research about teaching, learning and the curriculum – and then use this knowledge to review subject, year group and school policies.

New teachers are rightly proud of their learning to date and are anxious to be seen as professionals rather than students, so it is crucial to ensure that what they have learned to date provides a foundation for continuing development. Raising the status of early career mentoring is key to this and it is something that school leaders can make a reality right now.

Philippa Cordingley is Chief Executive of CUREE (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education). **Kelly McKay** works with Best Practice Network, a national provider of professional development and support for education professionals. More information at www.bestpracticenetwork.co.uk and www.curee.co.uk

WORRIES BUT SIGNS OF POSITIVE GROWTH

Lindsay Nadin reflects on research findings on attitudes following a challenging academic year

We'll soon be entering the new school year. For all of us in the sector, hopefully the summer was an important time to take a breath, take stock of where we are – and consider where we are heading for the next academic year.

It's safe to say it has been another year in education with us all kept on our toes as we respond to lockdowns, government announcements and ever-changing situations.

At learning company Pearson, we're committed to supporting schools with whatever comes their way. So, in April 2021 we commissioned a survey with Teacher Tapp, in order to gauge the collective atmosphere in staffrooms, classrooms and school corridors throughout the nation, and help inform how we can best support now and in future.

In the primary education team I lead, we wanted to hear how primary leaders and teachers felt they were managing with the ongoing pandemic and its many side-effects. What were their top priorities and concerns this summer term? How were pupils reacting? Which post-Covid-19 developments encouraged them – and, conversely, which were the most challenging? Almost 3,000 primary school 'teachers' – including heads, teachers, middle leaders and wider school leaders – took time to share their thoughts.

Their feedback indicates there's real work to be done to address mental health for both pupils and staff, as well as to tackle the nationally widening disadvantage gap. But there are also signs of positive growth – not least an uplifting transformation in pupil attitudes towards education itself.

In this piece I will explore some of the new research findings and reflect on how we might learn from this year. My hope? That, by listening and keeping conversations going about what's happening in the primary sector and taking time to direct support where it's most needed, all of us can kickstart the autumn term with optimism.

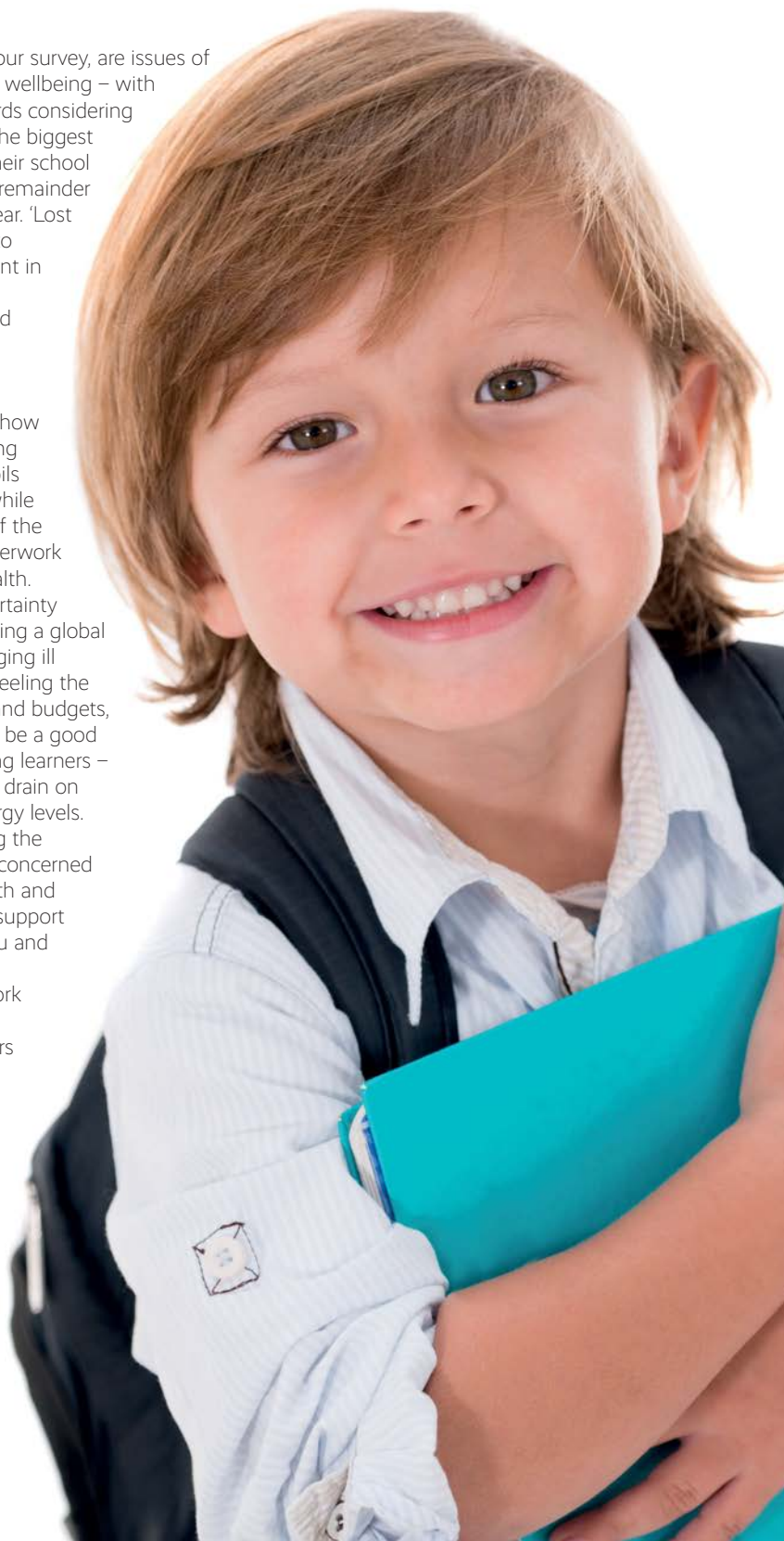
THE LOWDOWN FOR PRIMARY STAFF

Far and away the greatest challenge for primary schools at this point, according

to the teachers in our survey, are issues of staff workload and wellbeing – with more than two-thirds considering these areas to be the biggest challenge facing their school as a whole for the remainder of the academic year. 'Lost learning and how to cover course content in the available time' was also considered a challenge to more than half of primary teachers.

These findings show a profession working hard to ensure pupils don't fall behind, while also being aware of the possible risks of overwork to their mental health. Naturally, the uncertainty involved in navigating a global pandemic – managing ill health and worry, feeling the pressures of time and budgets, all while striving to be a good role model to young learners – has proved to be a drain on wellbeing and energy levels.

If you are among the two-thirds of staff concerned about mental health and workload, is there support in place to help you and your colleagues manage? In our work and conversations with primary leaders and teachers, many have emphasised the importance of taking the time to check in on their colleagues and those working around them. As one headteacher explained,



“If you are among the two-thirds of staff concerned about mental health and workload, is there support in place to help you and your colleagues manage?”

“while we can’t control external factors, having a supportive and trusting school culture in place is key to getting through challenges together”.

TOP PRIMARY PUPIL PRIORITIES

When it comes to the challenges facing primary pupils, student mental health and wellbeing, and the widening of the disadvantage gap top the list.

Indeed, while a host of initiatives have taken root in response to the need for widespread at-home learning – like the Computers for Kids campaign that we at Pearson support – the core ideals of accessibility, representation and home-based support have been sticking points for many since the pandemic began. As issues that cannot be solved overnight, the progress of certain pupils compared to others has been significant.

If we are to support all pupils to make academic progress over this term and beyond, then they must be mentally and emotionally ready to learn, and unfortunately our research would suggest that this has not been the case for many pupils post-lockdown. Significant proportions of primary teachers have witnessed students suffering with emotional outbursts (53 per cent), as well as sadness and mood swings (51 per cent) following the

return to school. One in three report seeing social withdrawal, anger and frustration and intense worry or fear among learners too.

The encouraging news is that primary schools across the UK are taking steps to juggle and rise to both the academic and emotional challenges of their learners. As well as three-quarters of primary teachers prioritising support for their learners’ academic progress this summer term, more than one in two primary teachers are also prioritising building confidence and addressing mental health and wellbeing needs.

Additionally, almost half of primary teachers reported making focused interventions for individual students an immediate priority.

NEW-FOUND ENJOYMENT

Among the worries and challenges reported in our survey, there were also heartening findings on how lockdown has positively impacted pupils, including what appears to be a newfound love of school. Over one in two primary teachers and leaders across the country reported seeing their pupils’ enjoyment of school increase post-lockdown.

Not only is there perhaps greater appreciation for teachers and education in the wake of the pandemic, but our findings also point to there now being a more resilient, tech-savvy and independent cohort of learners in our primary schools today.

Looking ahead, how can we build on these skills over the autumn term and beyond? Will digital and blended learning become a common-place aspect of primary education? How can we keep parents and carers as engaged and involved in their children’s learning as they have been? We all have exciting and thought-provoking questions to ask of ourselves when it comes to how we want primary teaching and learning to evolve.

COMPASSION

I’ve no doubt that pupils’ improved love of learning has been bolstered by the passion, drive and care of primary educators – who have shown, not least through this survey, consistently high levels of awareness, attentiveness, compassion and duty.

Throughout this unstable period, amid an alarmingly unpredictable global crisis, our primary leaders and teachers have proved that they are listening, that they are responsive and that they value support for

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SUPPORT

- **Having a supportive and trusting culture in your primary school is key to getting through challenges together. In need of some inspiration? See how this primary head nurtures a workforce built on collaboration: go.pearson.com/wellbeingkensington**
- **The widening of the disadvantage gap among pupils is a key concern for primary schools - draw on the subsidised support available to you, from the National Tutoring Programme - of which Pearson is a part of - to our suite of tools and resources, including specialist services in partnership with Mable Therapy: go.pearson.com/primaryspotlight21**
- **To progress academically, pupils need to be emotionally and mentally ready to learn. Likewise, leaders and teachers need to look after their own mental health and wellbeing to be effective too. Our Wellbeing Zone is filled with free resources and support for schools to promote whole-school mental health and wellbeing: go.pearson.com/wbz21**

each other and their pupils. But they must not shoulder this alone. It is up to organisations like mine, which strive to complement the good work of schools, to show that we are also responsive and listening; that dedicated support and advice is available to all teachers and leaders. By working together, we can all help create and deliver solutions for primary settings everywhere, and the generation of youngsters they stand to benefit.

I look forward to these conversations and collaborations continuing throughout the academic year and beyond. For now though, wherever you are, and whatever your role, thank you for all that you do.



Lindsay Nadin is Director of Primary and Direct to Learner at Pearson, the world’s leading learning company.

You can read Pearson’s Spotlight on Primary School Priorities report and access their free support at: go.pearson.com/primaryspotlight21

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Confidence or Competence?

Catherine Carden asks are you being caught in a confidence trap?

We all want to appoint and develop future leaders who will be strong and effective and who have a positive impact on those they lead. But, are we spotting and championing the right people and prioritising the right traits or are we blinded by certain personalities?

As I come to the end of reading *Why So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders (and how to fix it)* by Tomas Chomorro-Premuzic, I keep thinking about confidence and competence. This is something that Tomas devotes a chapter to within the book. I keep coming back to these thoughts as what he suggests is so important, yet often overlooked when spotting potentially successful leaders.

Why are we so often seduced by high levels of confidence? You know, the external confidence that some people emanate...that self-belief that they can do it well or know so much? Why are we in awe of those that tell us that they can, have and will? Those who always have something to say, or should I say state, in meetings. Those that tell us how good they are and those who relish a public platform. We often see these people as natural leaders who stand out from the crowd and who will surely do a great job in leading the school or subject... Don't worry, I too have fallen for the charisma of the externally uber-confident.

SMOKESCREEN

However, charisma and high levels of confidence are a smokescreen, a tactic, used to baffle and blindside us into believing that where there is confidence there must undoubtedly be competence. This is a myth! There is actually very little correlation between confidence (how good you think you are at something) and competence (how good you are at something). Confidence is a belief and competence a skill, yet time and time again we place our belief in the confidence without exploring the competence.

Initially, staff may be excited by the confidence exuded from the new appointment as they tell us what they can, sorry believe, they can do. Until, that is, the shine wears off and the reality of a lack of competence is exposed.

A great educational leader is highly competent not highly confident. We need leaders who are skilled and can lead effectively, juggling the daily challenges of school life with humility and integrity. Those who know what to do and how to do it. So, how can we seek to find competence rather than confidence?

RECRUITING STAFF

Is your selection process set up to favour the confident over the competent? Are we allowing ourselves to be bowled over by a shiny presentation rather than assessing the skills and leadership qualities we require? How do the humble and quiet

applicants show their competence? Does the process allow for performers to outperform those much more equipped to undertake the job? Is it time to overhaul your recruitment process?

DEVELOPING STAFF

How are you identifying potential? Are you being drawn to believing the most confident and charismatic are the future leaders? Do you then offer those people the opportunities to develop networks, skills and knowledge; perhaps overlooking those who would make for better leaders?

APPRAISING STAFF

How does our appraisal or performance management system assess competence over confidence? Do you invite staff to tell you how they believe they can or invite them to show you how they can? Do you ask difficult or evidence-based questions or invite detailed conversations to really get to know how competent your staff are?

DEVELOPING YOU

How are your views on competence influenced by confidence? And how might you try and address this to ensure that you are not overlooking great potential leaders for those who hide a lack of competence with over-confidence and charisma?

If you feel that you are being caught in the confidence trap change what you are doing to allow for those who are humble and show integrity to shine...it may just revolutionise your school!

Catherine Carden is a Director of Learning & Teaching in a Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education, a Chair of Governors in a Primary School and a Board Member of a small MAT. Catherine is also a contributor to Bowden Education offering online teacher development

“Why are we so often seduced by high levels of confidence?”

PLAN WELL AND OBEY THE LAW

Pam Mason looks at key considerations in school staffing restructures

After the strangest and challenging year in education it is likely that your focus has been on Covid-19 survival and not reviewing your staffing structure, however, the time has come to undertake a review for 21/22. The review will ensure your staffing structure is relevant to the school's current needs and priorities and its future vision, strategy and direction.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the funding it will allocate to local authorities for mainstream schools in 2021-22 based on the National Funding Formula (NFF) for schools (<https://bit.ly/3yXwaBW>).

These are provisional and notional funding allocations. They are subject to revision and are not necessarily what schools will actually receive. It is likely that most schools will have a reduced allocation, this on top of the significant increases in employment costs, will be felt by thousands of schools and academies in England and Wales and for many, this will involve making difficult decisions about future staffing requirements.

These ongoing cuts and additional expenses mean that in most restructuring exercises redundancies are likely to feature more heavily.

Any restructuring exercise, particularly those where redundancies are proposed, can be a challenging and time-consuming process for all concerned. To minimise disruption and to avoid costly Employment Tribunal claims, it is important that staffing changes are managed in a well-planned, fair and legally compliant way. Changes to the staffing structure must take into account employment and education laws, national terms and conditions of service, any relevant school policy and ACAS guidance <https://www.acas.org.uk/redundancy>. Forward planning is essential.

RESTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

The headteacher/principal is best placed to understand the school's needs and priorities and will therefore play a key role in putting together the change proposals and leading on the restructure. The appointment of a project manager can also be useful to ensure key milestones are met, this is usually a Business Manager or senior support staff.

Ultimate responsibility for authorising a new staffing structure lies with the Governing

Body/Trust Board, and so a first step will involve ensuring decision-making powers have been delegated to the headteacher and an appropriate sub-committee of the Governing Body. Having a Restructure Committee will make it easier for decisions to be made and will ensure that governors with no involvement are available in the event of staff appeals or grievances.

The Restructure Committee will play a significant part in overseeing the restructuring process, which will include approving the change proposals, considering the outcomes of consultation and approving the school's final proposals before implementation.

WHAT IS BEST FOR THE SCHOOL?

Schools should take the opportunity to carry out a thorough review of their existing structure and to design a new structure that reflects what is best for the school in the long term, regardless of the individuals currently in post. Schools must be mindful of limitations posed by the budget, pay policy and conditions of service, but should think about their priorities:

- What are the broad objectives and principles the school is trying to achieve?
- Does the new structure align with the school's future vision and future education requirements?
- Does it focus on teaching and learning and will teaching provision and outcomes for pupils improve?

PREPARE A BUSINESS CASE AND ACTION PLAN

The school's business case should include details of the changes proposed: the school's rationale, reasons and drivers for the change; and financial implications and any measures already taken. It should also give details of the numbers and type of staff to be affected, information about changes to job roles and job descriptions, and confirmation of whether any redundancies are proposed.

The business case should be sent to staff and trade unions with a proposed

timetable, action plan and structure charts. The action plan should include the school's consultation proposals and outline the school's approach where redundancies are proposed including details about redundancy payments, voluntary severance terms, arrangements for salary safeguarding or pay protection and any support to be offered to redundant staff.



“Any restructuring exercise, particularly those where redundancies are proposed, can be a challenging and time-consuming process for all concerned.”

BE CLEAR ON COSTS

The costs associated with a restructure exercise can be substantial and so costing the revised structure will be an integral part of the process. The cost of statutory, enhanced redundancy payments, voluntary severance arrangements and payments in lieu of notice (if relevant) will also need to be included. Costs can rise significantly where there are pension cost implications.

Obtaining early advice is recommended to assess financial burden.

THINK WELLBEING

Any organisational change is likely to create a high level of anxiety for the whole staff team, especially now staff are dealing with Covid-related life challenges. It would be highly supportive to provide staff with different levels of wellbeing interventions, these could include group resilience coaching, change management support or individual counselling. Ensure these interventions are set up and can be provided at the point consultation begins.

CONSIDER TIMINGS AND ENSURE MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION

Ensure sufficient time is given to carry out the process fairly and reasonably, taking into account; the extent of the proposed changes, whether redundancies are necessary, the number and categories of staff affected, statutory consultation periods (if they apply) and statutory and contractual notice periods.

Schools should engage formally in meaningful consultation with relevant trade unions/teacher associations and with all staff affected.

HAVE A FAIR REDUNDANCY SELECTION PROCESS

There are a number of elements to a fair selection process. This will include deciding on the correct ‘pools’

HOW TO MANAGE STAFF WELLBEING DURING CHANGE

- **Communicate the rationale of the change in a simple and honest way to staff.**
- **Have a central email where staff can send their questions or seek further information.**
- **Provide resilience sessions to all staff in school and not just those in scope of change – the process can be upsetting for those unaffected too.**
- **Ensure line managers understand how the changes affect their staff so they can provide appropriate support and seek support themselves.**
- **Allow staff to access counselling if required to support them through the process.**
- **Look after your own wellbeing, the process will increase your workload, you can’t help others if you are not feeling resilient and focused.**

of staff for selection and ensuring that a range of selection criteria, which are objective and non-discriminatory, are applied by a suitably appointed selection panel. The selection criteria will usually be applied using a points or scoring system, via a selection matrix. It is important that no account is taken of any disability or pregnancy-related absences.

FINAL COMMENTS

Restructuring can be daunting especially if you have never gone through the process before but don’t be anxious about proposing change, all change needs to be consulted upon with staff and trade unions, be ready to adapt your initial plans if needed.

Schools are strongly advised to take HR advice in relation to any proposed selection process, since it is often the redundancy selection exercise which is central to unfair dismissal and Equality Act claims following redundancy dismissals.



Pam Mason, One Education Ltd Senior HR Manager. She has been advising schools for over ten years and is a primary school governor with safeguarding responsibilities



WEATHERING THE STORM

Ernest Jenavs looks at the strong bonds that were built as schools and Trusts navigated Covid-19 disruption

At a time of disruption and uncertainty, belonging to a community can help us weather the storm as we rely on each other for support and guidance, and to encourage each other to push through. This community is one of the key reasons schools join Multi-Academy Trusts: to share knowledge and skills, and share the load when times are hard. With schools facing some of the hardest times imaginable over the past year, how have school staff and leaders felt about being part of the Trust structure?

At Edurio, we investigated the perceived value of Trust membership, through survey responses from over 10,000 Trust staff. We also interviewed Principals at three Academies and central staff from two Multi-Academy Trusts, to understand first-hand what they had implemented during the Covid-19 disruption, and how that was working in the schools they serve. We shared our findings in a report, *Trusting in Trusts*, published on March 25. One of the key things the report showed was that by Autumn 2020, more staff believed being part of a Trust was beneficial, with the proportion increasing from 38 per cent before Covid-19 to 44 per cent during the pandemic.

In the report, we then looked in more detail at some of the factors contributing to that shift:

- Clear and consistent communication.
- Ability of the Trust to address staff needs.
- The Trust's vision and values.

Each of these played a key role in navigating the Covid-19 disruption, but show general principles that can be carried through as we enter into a period of recovery.

CLEAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

We looked at communication among Trust central staff, school leaders and wider school staff. Forty-four per cent of staff think the information their Trust shares with them is useful, and three quarters were happy with the frequency of communication. Staff reported being pleased with clear information relating to changing guidelines and other Covid-related information, and school and Trust leaders discussed their thoughtful approach to sharing responsibility for

communicating with staff.

Jane Acklam OBE, CEO of South Pennine Trust, explained that consistent communication was one of the core tenets of their Covid-19 response. The Trust took on responsibility for understanding the changing guidelines and distilling the information to Principals for them to share further. To do so, Trust leadership met with Principals twice a week in order to share updates, answer questions and give school leaders confidence in the direction the Trust was taking. Debbie Kelly, Principal at one of the academies within South Pennine Trust, explained how her leadership team tried to keep their messages clear, but never pretended to have all the answers. Instead, they encouraged staff to get involved in discussions and report issues they were experiencing.

This approach – Principals taking information from central Trust staff and passing it onto their schools – was also adopted by Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). Gemma Simon and Helen Steele, Principals at two AET academies, explained how school leaders relied on AET's School Support Services to understand the changing situation and plan next steps, so they could inform their school staff.

Kevin Parish, AET Director of HR, says that during this disruption, he felt the various levels of the Trust started to genuinely listen to each other. The Executive Team heard views from far more staff than usual and worked hard to respond to their needs.

Clear advice, consistent across the Trust and across leadership levels, will remain invaluable in creating a strong Trust community as we return to face-to-face schooling.

ABILITY OF THE TRUST TO ADDRESS STAFF NEEDS

We found that while 42 per cent of staff feel confident the Trust leadership actively work to address their professional needs, 27 per cent felt the opposite and only 23 per cent think it is easy to communicate their concerns to the Trust. This shows us there is more to do to ensure all staff feel supported by their Trust. There is a marked difference in this sentiment by role, with some feeling they are not as well supported as others. One respondent said:

"I feel that teachers are supported

professionally but not always the non-teaching staff. There can sometimes be a divide between the two."

Some highlight the importance of school and Trust leaders following up on feedback they receive to show what is being done as a result, and some mentioned feeling concerned about the repercussions of directly voicing their concerns. However, we have also seen evidence of Trusts and Principals working closely together to try and address staff needs during the ongoing disruption.

Like in many other Trusts, AET's School Support Services were in almost daily contact with principals to solve issues, pre-empt and anticipate what might happen next and support each other along the way. The effect of this has been to create an even stronger sense of team and togetherness.

At South Pennine Trust, reducing workload by streamlining staff priorities was one way they tried to protect staff well-being. In November, when the Covid-19 cases in the region were at their highest and a substantial proportion of staff were not able to engage with work full-time, the Trust decided to suspend all afterschool clubs and the usually packed CPD calendar until the end of the year. During small-group video meetings, Trust staff not only engaged with the participants but were also looking out for cues in body language and communication that might signal that the person is struggling, so they could follow up individually and discuss what help could be given.

Creating a safe and straightforward place for feedback/input, and considering the needs of all staff regardless of role, will remain important as staff needs change during the Covid-19 recovery period.

“At South Pennine Trust, reducing workload by streamlining staff priorities was one way they tried to protect staff well-being.”

THE TRUST'S VISION AND VALUES

Seven in ten school staff are clear on - and, crucially, agree with - the Trust's vision and values, and most see them embedded into the culture of their school. One respondent said:

“When you hear a year two pupil talk about pushing their limits and being remarkable you know you have it embedded!”

This is great news, however, there is still more to be done. School staff are not always certain the vision is being followed within individual schools, and others are unsure whether the school's values align with that of other member schools and the wider Trust.

During the pandemic, AET took a community-building approach. Jonathan Allen, AET Director of Marketing and Communications, shared three main priorities the Trust had set for the period - Superior virtual learning; Great well-being support; and 'Have fun along the way!'. He talked about AET's annual Festival of Remarkable Lives, an event for staff and pupils to showcase their talents and achievements. They considered cancelling the event but instead shifted online, and over 30,000 people from within the Trust community joined in for the celebration.

The mechanisms Trusts and school leaders employ to embed the vision and values across the schools may change with the circumstances, but there are lessons to be learned from the pandemic around bringing the Trust community together. For example, virtual get-togethers may no longer be the only option, but they can remain an option.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As we enter a period of recovery and begin to plan life after the pandemic, there will be many elements we will happily leave behind. But while some specific types of communication, support or vision-sharing exercises may no longer be needed, the underlying principles remain vital factors in building a strong Trust community, and - hopefully - helping more school staff feel the benefit of being part of a Trust in future.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Edurio's research highlights three general principles that contribute to positive perceptions of Trust membership, and which can be carried through as we enter a period of recovery:

- **CLEAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION:** Clear advice, consistent across the Trust and across leadership levels, will remain invaluable in creating a strong Trust community as we return to face-to-face schooling.
- **ABILITY OF THE TRUST TO ADDRESS STAFF NEEDS:** Creating a safe and straightforward place for feedback/input, and considering the needs of all staff regardless of role, will remain important as staff needs change during the Covid-19 recovery period.
- **THE TRUST'S VISION AND VALUES:** The mechanisms Trusts and school leaders employ to embed the vision and values across the schools may change with the circumstances, but there are lessons to be learned from the pandemic around bringing the Trust community together. For example, virtual get-togethers may no longer be the only option, but they can remain an option.



Ernest Jenavs,
CEO of Edurio

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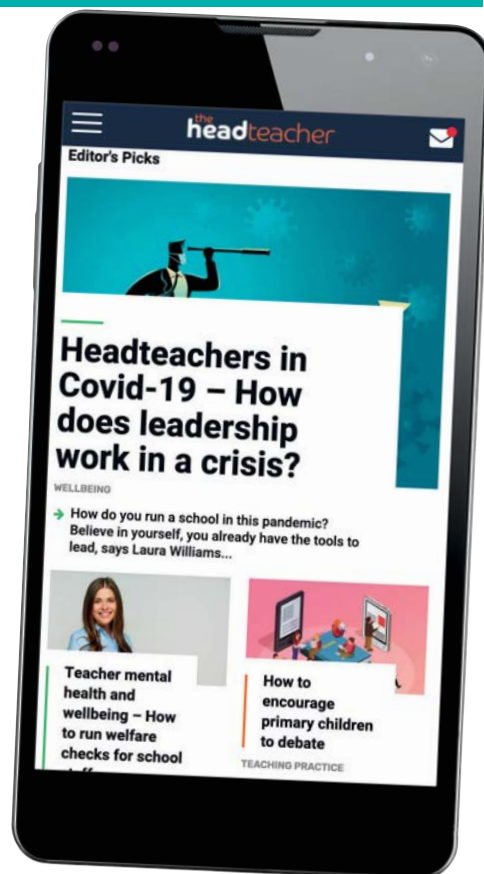
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Invest time in your staff

Zoe Enser examines how to develop and implement a CPD curriculum

Great teaching is one of the most effective and efficient ways to ensure that all students can achieve their best outcomes in education. Evidence shows that high quality teaching is the element which has the biggest impact, closely followed by great leadership.

However, neither of these are easy to achieve. Teacher development, and the leadership of such, is a complex issue and research shows that historically CPD hasn't always had the desired impact, with a significant gap between what teachers know and what they can do with that in the classroom. The CUREE report, commissioned by the Training and Development Agency to review teacher development, found that barely one per cent of CPD had a 'transforming' impact on classroom practice and therefore the outcomes of students. That equates to a lot of time devoted to it, with very little to show. So how can great leaders utilise the lessons we have learnt about curriculum planning and learning over the last few years, in order to ensure teacher development has the desired impact?

VISION

First it is important to know where we are heading; the vision or purpose of the CPD we are developing. Curriculum is a journey we want to take people on, and developing teachers is no different. Clarity around the purpose is essential, as is understanding what our destination will look like. This takes time to plan, and it is important to first carefully diagnose what the issues we want to address are, identify the levers which could have the biggest impact – and understand where our staff are and what they need to know and do

to build upon their current practice.

Once this has been identified we need to consider if we have the right conditions for this to happen. If CPD is not valued or if people aren't invested in their development, it is unlikely to have much of an impact. Equally, if we are considering making big changes at a time when people are already pulled in many different directions, CPD can easily end up becoming a list of things to do, not things to understand and develop.

This means creating a culture of improvement, one that focuses on honest and open reflections about practice, as well as one where people feel they are trusted to explore new approaches and be open about when things go wrong. We can learn a lot from when things haven't worked, and people need to feel safe to examine that. We need staff buy in if we want to make a change, so they need to see they are a valued part of the process.

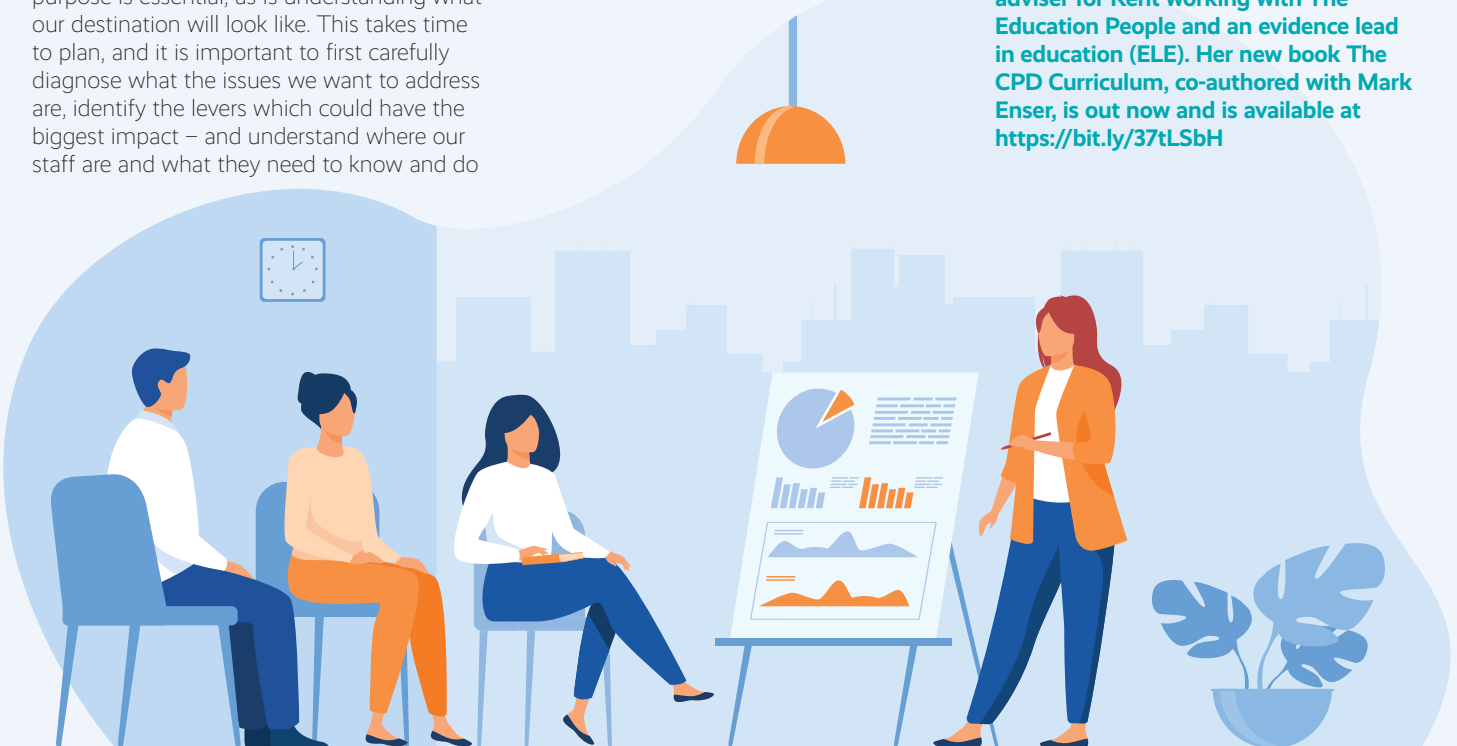
“We need staff buy in if we want to make a change, so they need to see they are a valued part of the process.”

FOCUS

Once these conditions for growth have been established, you need to consider the steps and stages you will go through to get to your desired destination. Consider the milestones, points of assessment and opportunities for reflection which will ensure you are on the right track. Learning needs to be layered over time and changing teacher habits, or any habits, needs time, focus and concentration. Look for those small steps needed just as you would when guiding your students through a curriculum. You may decide that some people need to be on a slightly different course, some accelerating though, some diverting a little or slowing down. Experts need different approaches to novices, but if people feel involved in deciding that route, they are more likely to stay on the path with you.

Most importantly when building a curriculum for your CPD you need to invest time. Time to plan, reflect, discuss, and evaluate. No journey like this will happen overnight. There may be bumps along the road. But if you get this right it could start to transform things for your students. Developing a cohesive and structured approach to CPD, which values adult learning as much as that of their students, is one of the best ways to ensure too that learning is something we value well beyond the school gates.

Zoe Enser is the lead specialist English adviser for Kent working with The Education People and an evidence lead in education (ELE). Her new book *The CPD Curriculum*, co-authored with Mark Enser, is out now and is available at <https://bit.ly/37tLSbH>



LOOKING OUT FOR THE DSLS

Designating safeguarding leads have been doing an excellent job during the pandemic - just make sure you are watching out for them, says **Hannah Glossop**

I think we're all hoping that, come this time next year, language such as social distancing, lockdowns and self-isolation will seem as strangely distant and 'of its time' as doodlebugs, blitz, blackouts and rationing so clearly speak of our dark times.

That we can put all this behind us and return to where we were before March 2020 is the hope, but for the moment we are still far from clear of the pandemic and the disruptive influence it is having on the lives of our pupils, their families and our colleagues.

Everyone working in our primary schools, from the headteachers to teaching assistants, SENCOs to lunchtime supervisors, has been through the mill in the past 15 months but they have kept things together with a quiet commitment to duty.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is one of those colleagues who has had to bear much responsibility over that time. And I think we all need to make sure that they have the space and support they need as they continue to deal with the impact covid has had on our children and young people.

NEGLECT

The extent of that fallout on pupils is not yet clear, but it is clear from a number of perspectives that it wasn't a positive experience for many children. Late last year, UK local authorities said there had been an increase in child protection referrals, while the NSPCC recently reported a record rise in calls and messages to its helpline, suggesting that this raised fears that children who weren't able to attend school during lockdowns were more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

Your school's DSL will be on the alert to look for any signs of safeguarding issues. Their role is all about thinking of the children in your school and acting to protect them. But who is thinking about protecting them?

DSLs have already been working incredibly hard throughout the pandemic. They will not have stopped since March 2020. That has created extra workload - and mental load - for them.

The DSL's bible - Keeping Children Safe in Education - states that if a member of staff learns of a safeguarding issue with a child they must disclose this to the DSL. Though many schools will have Deputy DSLs, the ultimate lead responsibility lies with the DSL - a responsibility that cannot be delegated.

And there's a likelihood that these responsibilities will be expanded soon, with a number of proposed changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

There's a clear risk for DSLs in smaller primary schools, who are far more likely to be on their own, that they might end up having to take on this additional responsibility themselves.

All this change and pressure leads us to one clear conclusion: that in order to do the job more effectively DSLs need more support.

PRESSURES

In primary schools, the headteacher will often be the DSL - and they may have to carry out the role without any support. This creates particular pressures. They need to have someone they can go to for support



“Your local authority could also be a source of networking support.”

and to share their concerns such as the chair of governors. Ensuring that there is an open-door culture that allows the headteacher DSL to be open and honest about their worries is vitally important.

Your governing body should also become part of that caring, sharing culture. Every governing body must have a governor with oversight of safeguarding with the responsibility of making sure that school meets its safeguarding requirements. Encourage them to seek out safeguarding training from external providers so that they better understand the DSL's responsibilities and the pressures they face.

This training will also help them to carry out effective safeguarding audits. These regular internal checks to make sure that all safeguarding processes are watertight and that all safeguarding procedures are being followed

can provide real peace of mind, both for the DSL and the school.

The most effective way of supporting the DSL is to ensure that every colleague is clear that they can play their part. It's important to promote the fact that if children have any worries they can talk to any member of staff and they will be listened to. Of course, that staff member must then pass that information on to the DSL.

LINKS

The ability to talk through a complex case, especially if it does not meet the threshold for social care involvement, can be a real burden for DSLs. Network meetings can help. If those connections with DSLs in other schools do not yet exist, then taking the time to reach out and suggest those links could be a very positive move. The links I established with my DSL peers in other local schools were particularly useful when I was in the role at the beginning of the pandemic.

Your local authority could also be a source of networking support. I was fortunate to be able to attend termly meetings held by my local authority's safeguarding board. It was another source of support and advice and the sense that I was alone in this role was a major boost to my confidence.

It's also worth investing some time in social media. Twitter has become a particularly good source of support and a good way to learn about strategies from other DSLs that will help in the day to day of the role. Following the hashtags #safeguarding and #DSL is highly recommended.

Larger primary schools can also take creative approaches to give DSLs some time in which to plug into these networks and have that crucial time for reflection and recovery. For example, their teaching contact time could be reduced or certain duties can be covered by a colleague. It's

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Hannah Glossop's key advice for supporting your Designating Safeguarding Lead:

- **Headteacher DSLs need someone to be open and honest with. Your chair of governors could give you that support.**
- **Provide peace of mind with regular audits by your safeguarding governor.**
- **Seek external advice and training.**
- **Make it clear that all colleagues can play their part – as long as they follow formal procedures and refer all safeguarding disclosures to the DSL.**
- **Network with DSLs in nearby schools and through your local authority.**
- **Use social media as a source of advice and support.**

a way of winning them some time back without it costing the earth.

If the budget does permit, then building a larger team around the DSL is a wise move. Giving staff DSL training will help to spread the burden a little more widely so that when the DSL is dealing with a high priority case, they can be confident that there is someone else around to pick up the lower priority issues. As we've all come to realise over the past 15 months, having a bit of capacity in a system is a good way of avoiding panic.



Hannah Glossop is a former designated safeguarding lead who now heads up Judicium's safeguarding service. Further information is available at www.judiciumeducation.co.uk/safeguarding-service and @JudiciumSG on Twitter.

PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL

Chetan Sood explains the benefits of clever workforce planning

The experience of the pandemic has fundamentally shifted work practices and workforce priorities across pretty much every sector.

Naturally, education has been constantly in the spotlight, with seemingly everyone from parents to the Government weighing in on how best to weather the storm.

Headteachers and senior leaders have worked tirelessly to not only meet the day-to-day challenges of keeping their school communities safe and engaged, but also the longer term effects that these changes have, or may have, on their colleagues and professional networks. Critical to this has been the responsive and sympathetic management of workload, safeguarding both physical and mental health, and ensuring team cohesion even when remote working and social distancing resulted in a physical barrier to normal service.

An equally responsive and dynamic workforce management approach will help headteachers navigate uncertain times, including the potential for resignations, and ensure safe and even-handed provision in the months and years ahead. Here are some top tips on how to cultivate a reliable, dedicated network of teaching and support staff who can help you ensure the safety and wellbeing of all in your school community:

LONG-TERM WORKFORCE SUCCESS

There is little doubt that short-term staffing crises are one of the major headaches for school leaders and staff in equal measure. Having a reliable network of part-time teachers, supply or support staff - even just a trusted pair of hands to help during a particularly challenging week - can really reduce the impact of sudden staffing gaps on your core staff team.

Having an already-known PPA cover teacher; a first-aid trained admin helper; or a SEN one-to-one TA in your network, already vetted, checked and ready to deploy can massively reduce the burden of inducting a new supply team member into school and dealing with any difficulties that can arise.

Schools which access staff via a staff bank or talent pool for on-call provision see much improved consistency, lower costs and lower day-to-day overheads than if they simply engaged with a revolving door of agency workers. Remember, high staff turnover benefits supply agencies but creates additional work for headteachers. By establishing a staff bank for repeat bookings you will no longer have to build rapport with each new supply teacher that

walks through your door, no need to constantly tell people about your school's values and way of working, making the whole process feel a whole lot smoother.



“Start planning by looking at your known staffing requirements as well as those that may be possible and even unknown or future needs.”

PLAN YOUR LIKELY REQUIREMENTS

Your core team is of course the backbone of your school community, however, almost all schools will have some level of extra staffing requirements, even aside from the straightforward vacancies and recruitment activity. Planning staff resources for these often unexpected needs is key!

Start planning by looking at your known staffing requirements as well as those that may be possible and even unknown or future needs. The possible scenarios are the ones that you want to focus on in the planning phase now as these possible scenarios will make up the bulk of your forward staffing requirements: how many one-to-one TAs do you have currently? Is Year 5 always a challenge to recruit for? Is there a dearth of experienced STEM teachers in your area?

In addition, think about your core staff's wellbeing, their workloads and extra demands, particularly when the 'possible scenarios' are likely to be more frequent, more disruptive and longer lasting due to the pressures of the pandemic. Doing so carries the real risk of pushing your core staff to burnout.

Consider your existing network of supply and known part-time/cover staff. How many of these staff (who are good) could you seek to contact again now so that they have your school in the forefront of their mind? How can you establish a direct line of communication with those individuals who, if given the option, would be the first choice to provide additional support in your school?

And don't forget, you're not alone! Other headteachers in your local area will be in the exact same

position as you are. Reach out to your local headteacher network and see if there are any options for staff sharing programmes. Social platforms like Twitter or

LinkedIn can also add value here - thousands of headteachers use both on a daily basis - a quick post about your requirements can yield multiple offers of support very quickly. Identify the most immediate, efficient and cost effective recruitment resources available.

Most school leaders will have a line of communication with an overarching authority - be that via an Academy group, Local Authority or school partnership organisation. Use them for support on mapping out and making the local staff and SLT connections you need. It is the remit of these types of organisation to maintain a broad view of local demographics, recruitment trends, retention rates and local candidates, plus they will have deep knowledge of the internal and third party services (and any deals) available to you at their fingertips. If your chosen approach is to attract candidates and build your own flexible working bank of staff, how will you manage this and keep candidates engaged, especially if it turns out you don't have an immediate need? You don't want to waste your talent attraction efforts!

REDUCE PRESSURE ON YOUR WORKFORCE BY TAKING EARLY ACTION

If you are able to rely on a small network of trusted staff for the majority of your supply and absence requirements, you will both foster trust within that network, reducing the pressure on your core workforce. They'll know the supply teacher who is covering their absence and their ways of working, and this will translate into a reduction of pressure and workload on both your core team member and the supply cover staff. Having a bank of staff means that additional workload, which will inevitably be created by having absences and vacancies, can be shared as effectively as possible and maintain a better degree of work/life balance for your staff and network.

WELLBEING

Your colleagues' continued physical and mental wellbeing is central to the success of your school. Knowing that they are valued, understood and listened to will empower your staff to identify what they need to succeed and ultimately deliver the best education to your pupils as they can. Ask questions regularly and gain their thoughts and opinions about supply cover and those they like best. The feedback you receive will be hugely valuable for future planning. Of course, it goes without saying that all school leaders will be taking every possible step to provide

GET YOUR WORKFORCE PLAN IN SHAPE

- **Don't just think about the now, think about the next few months and the future too. What are your likely requirements? Do you foresee any gaps? A simple spreadsheet outlining the positions you may need to fill will help give you direction.**
- **Look at your options for sourcing supply teachers. The agency route, setting up your own bank of supply staff, liaising with local Academy groups, your local authority or even local headteacher networks.**
- **Think about the whole team. If you can rely on a network of staff who have worked for you and your core team in the past, it will reduce the pressure and their workload. You will have supply staff that you know and trust, who know the school values and even your core staff's ways of working.**
- **Think long-term. What system will work for you and your school? Think about consistency, day-to-day overheads and costs. Clever planning now can save you thousands in the long run.**

the safest work environment for their staff, and ensure that there are opportunities for feedback regarding this. Maintaining a happy, engaged, secure and cohesive workforce, backed up with a trusted and reliable network of support staff, will set you up for long-term recruitment and retention success, helping you to support your students over the coming months and years ahead.



Chetan Sood is head of operations at Teacher Booker, which offers a range of services providing impartial, confidential advice and practical solutions. For more information visit teacherbooker.com. Follow Teacher Booker on Twitter and Facebook: @teacherbooker or email hello@teacherbooker.com

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The importance of classroom relationships

Sheila Mulvenney explains why all adults should understand the impact of attachment, adversity and trauma on student behaviour in the classroom

As head of the virtual school for children in care in five local authorities I've worked with a large number of schools and settings. Many trying hard to support some of our most troubled and damaged children and young people.

Quite apart from those who are in care there are many more who have previously been in care or are on child in need or protection plans or are known by the school to be vulnerable in some other ways.

Every school needs some rules and discipline and these are reflected in the behaviour policy but there will always be some students for whom the usual rewards and sanctions don't seem to be effective. Often these will be the vulnerable young folk whose behaviour is not always under their conscious control but rather driven by some deeper needs and processes.

SURVIVAL

Let's look at attachment first. Humans are wired for connection, relationships are vital for all of us, that's one of the reasons why this pandemic has been so tough, we've often not been able to see or be physically close to some of the people we are attached to. Attachment needs continue throughout life but they are absolutely vital in early childhood when the brain is developing rapidly, creating neural pathways that will help the child to form trusting relationships, and develop self-esteem.

A baby not 'claimed' by an adult won't have a good chance of survival. Instead of being comforted and having their needs met by an adult who they can calm (co-regulate) with and learn to trust as they experience safety and security, babies and children who experience poor attachments are left feeling adrift, learning that the world is unpredictable or hostile.

If attachment needs aren't met sufficiently when the child is young, they don't disappear. These children will arrive in school and their priority 'need' is attachment. This isn't something they cognitively decide it is an inbuilt drive. As adults we may see it as attention seeking but really it is attachment seeking – they are saying to adults 'have you noticed me', 'will you keep me safe', 'will you give me what I need', 'can I trust you? Until those needs are met, they will find learning a struggle and may go to extreme lengths to ensure they are noticed.

"If attachment needs aren't met sufficiently when the child is young, they don't disappear."

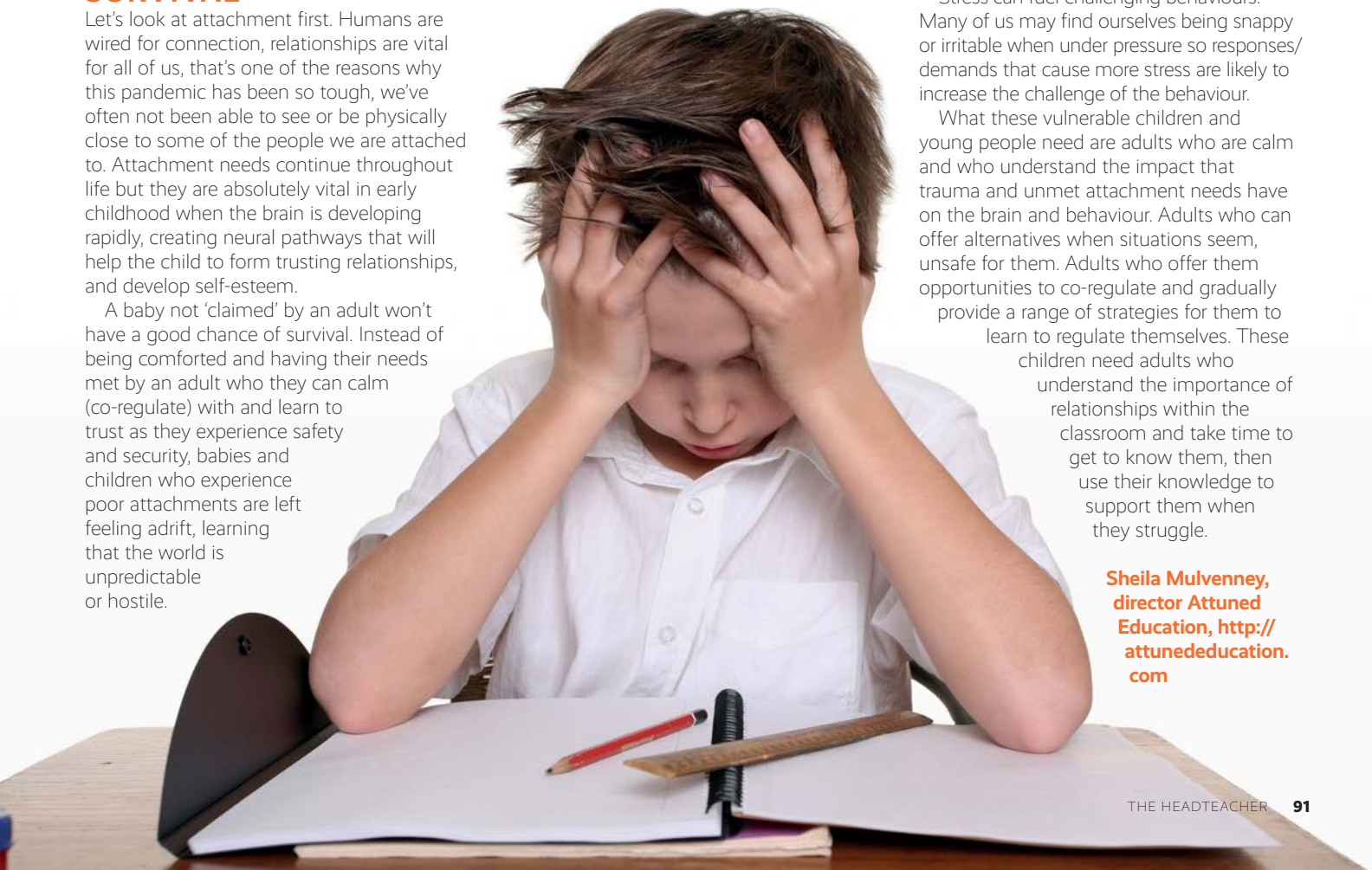
AGGRESSIVE

Then, there is trauma. Over recent years we have come to recognise that the toxic levels of stress caused by early trauma and adversity, stress that is overwhelming often prolonged, repeated and inescapable, such as in abuse, with no 'buffer' from attached adults, causes changes to the developing brain. Children who have experienced such trauma are hyperalert to threat and danger. But not the danger we'd be alert to, it can be things they perceive as dangerous, work they can't manage, the way someone looks at them, break time or any one of a number of other things. When gripped by fear they can easily find themselves in the panic of survival mode where they will react with fight, flight or freeze responses. To say they are choosing to be defiant, aggressive, or uncommunicative doesn't tell the whole story.

Stress can fuel challenging behaviours. Many of us may find ourselves being snappy or irritable when under pressure so responses/demands that cause more stress are likely to increase the challenge of the behaviour.

What these vulnerable children and young people need are adults who are calm and who understand the impact that trauma and unmet attachment needs have on the brain and behaviour. Adults who can offer alternatives when situations seem, unsafe for them. Adults who offer them opportunities to co-regulate and gradually provide a range of strategies for them to learn to regulate themselves. These children need adults who understand the importance of relationships within the classroom and take time to get to know them, then use their knowledge to support them when they struggle.

Sheila Mulvenney,
director Attuned
Education, <http://attunededucation.com>



WHO'S TEACHING THE TEACHERS?

Caroline Doherty reveals how the pandemic has led to a seismic shift in CPD

It seems like a lifetime ago when we could book a day's training at a nice hotel, and enjoy bumping into a colleague from a neighbouring school over a barista coffee and fancy biscuits, or even gather all the school's staff in one room for a twilight.

Throughout the pandemic, schools have had to adapt their ways of working constantly but what training has been in place to give staff the confidence and know-how to tackle the challenges they face? Have schools pivoted to CPD via Zoom or has further developing their staff's skills and knowledge simply been forced to take a back seat?

We know over the last 18 months schools have rightly been focussing on supporting their students and communities through an unprecedented time of change, and tirelessly dealing with each new version of Covid-19 guidance as it has landed. It's therefore no surprise that in our recent survey, half (44 per cent) of leaders told us their staff had taken part in less like-for-like CPD in

the last 12 months. Despite this, 88 per cent of leaders also stated that they felt CPD was either "extremely important" or "important" to the post pandemic recovery of their school. Indeed, nearly half (44 per cent) shared that they plan to increase their CPD provision in the coming year. The impact of high-quality CPD cannot be underestimated, in fact the Education Policy Institute recently suggested that by spending an extra £500 per teacher on CPD (costing less than one per cent of the total school's budget) the government could prevent up to 12,000 teachers leaving the profession every year. It could also boost pupil attainment by an extra two-thirds of a GCSE grade - which in turn, translates to extra lifetime earnings of more than £6,000 per student.

AN EVOLVING CPD LANDSCAPE

It is fair to say the CPD landscape has never been more vibrant. The last ten years have seen a dramatic increase in evidence-based practice and a real democratisation of information, with organisations like the Education Endowment Foundation, The Chartered College of Teaching, and ResearchED really getting research into the hands of practitioners. So much more CPD content now comes directly from those who are still in the classroom themselves. Many schools now use their own staff to deliver sessions to their colleagues, using research and evidence to really speak to their own improvement priorities and context.

With many more people involved in the delivery of CPD in some way, there has also been an inevitable growth in teachers and leaders putting themselves out there, whether on Twitter, Youtube, podcasts, blogs, webinars or LinkedIn, sharing their work for the benefit of others.

While this is an



undeniably great thing, as a consumer of this content, it can be hard to know where to start, or where the real, tried and tested, quality content lies.

AND THEN CAME THE PANDEMIC...

Just as it did for other aspects of our work and home lives, the pandemic forced us to think differently about CPD. Suppliers in the CPD space had no choice but to rip-up the rulebook and think again about how effective professional development can be delivered remotely.

But, instead of a CPD drought there was a veritable flood of people offering up new options. The pandemic has opened our eyes to innovative learning models that eliminate the stresses around inclusivity, travel and cost to attend conferences and events. We've seen a tendency towards shorter, bite-size learning supported by rich discussion that happens with colleagues in school, about how to "make it happen" in their context. With this exposure to a new way to consume CPD, our survey showed that just nine per cent of school leaders had a preference for returning to in-person CPD provision (such as conferences) post-pandemic. Two-thirds (67 per cent) are keen to use a combination of both online and in-person - and nearly a quarter (23 per cent) want to keep their CPD online only in the future.

LEADERS LIKE YOU

Lots of schools are already exploring new ways of addressing CPD, so they can get to work and drive change in the coming months and years.

We recently sat down with Paul Ainsworth, School Improvement Director at Infinity Academies Trust and Sufian Sadiq, Director of Teaching School at Chiltern Learning Trust. They discussed their thoughts on CPD and how it will evolve as we head into a new normal. What is clear, is that school leaders have worked tirelessly to make sure staff have not been left adrift.

During the pandemic, Infinity Academies Trust turned to the written word to help address the needs of its staff. Everyone was asked to submit a single idea for improving teaching and learning. The suggestions were collated into a printed booklet that was sent to every member of staff. The exercise was well received, illustrating that often the simplest of ideas can have the biggest impact.

Chiltern Academy Trust embraced technology for its response to the lockdown. The trust opened up its CPD to

"It is fair to say the CPD landscape has never been more vibrant."

support all schools regardless of their location. It staged 150 free online events watched by over 25,000 people in a staggering 81 countries. Previously, it would have been a challenge to attract staff living locally to an in-person event. But, by broadcasting on YouTube, the trust was able to draw an audience of teachers from as far afield as Australia. And the key to its success? Each session lasted just 45 minutes and the recordings were available for people to catch-up if they missed them.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

We know it is never as simple as just picking up what worked in one school and applying it elsewhere. Even change within the same school takes time and can require a significant amount of staff buy-in. Planning and timing are crucial. At one Infinity Academies Trust school, a change to the maths curriculum took six years. Teachers began by introducing a single revision. The new idea was tested then tweaked and reintroduced. The cycle continued until every member of the maths department was satisfied.

So much more CPD has become available during this period and schools often encourage staff to pick areas that they want further explore for themselves alongside school development priorities. While there can be a huge benefit to staff selecting their own CPD materials and personal learning outcomes, it's worth considering what happens after that staff member consumes their CPD. Schools might want to think about creating a reading group, for example, where teachers choose a particular topic then come together to reflect on what they have learnt and how they can apply it to their teaching. Indeed, the on-demand videos and live-streamed events created for our own digital CPD platform - have been designed with team viewing in mind. Staff can watch as a group and then discuss key outcomes and ways of implementing change.

The only constant is change. But it seems likely that the days of spending hundreds of pounds on day-long conferences and courses are already behind us. As we move into a new normal, the way staff consume CPD will be radically different, and despite its challenges, the pandemic and its world of new tech has breathed life into CPD delivery. With new needs, to new challenges, leaders can now lean on this innovation to support staff and address the impact the pandemic has had, on the whole school community.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITY AREAS?

- **PHONICS:** The DfE has removed the 2007 Letters and Sounds handbook from its list of validated phonics programme. Choosing a recommended Systematic Synthetic Phonics scheme will be a big issue for primary school leaders. Phonics training is not just for Year 1 or Year 2 practitioners. Year 5 and 6 teachers must also know how phonics is being delivered in their school. The introduction of the new EYFS framework this year and the government's recently released Reading Framework might also be areas of focus for some schools.
- **MIDDLE LEADERSHIP AND THE CURRICULUM:** Curriculum has been high on the agenda for some time as a result of Ofsted's focus in this area. Those leading aspects of the curriculum have more of a prominent role to play in building their own subject knowledge and that of others, as well as explaining their curriculum thinking and decisions to a wider audience. In addition, in the coming year schools will be thinking about how to sure-up any gaps in curriculum foundations caused by the disruption to teaching.
- **FEEDBACK TO PUPILS:** Giving high-quality feedback that clearly unpicks misconceptions and moves the child's learning along is the holy grail of marking, and doing it in a way that also reduces teacher workload is even better. A lot of schools are increasing their use of verbal feedback both to individual pupils and using whole class verbal feedback. Indeed, many more schools are keen to understand how these schools have cracked it and how they could make it work in their own setting.



Caroline Doherty is head of education strategy at The Key. For more information about IdeaStream, The Key's new CPD offering, visit: key.sc/keyideastream

LITERACY

Bloomsbury Readers

Helping emerging readers to build fluency and confidence, from a trusted partner

AT A GLANCE

- An extensive series of books to help build reader confidence and skill
- Teacher notes available online to accompany every text
- A huge range of themes and topics to choose from
- Titles written by a diverse range of award-winning authors

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

Bloomsbury is a name synonymous with books. Steeped in history, the publisher is a household name and has brought us hundreds of stories, many of which we will have enjoyed at different stages of our lives. Bloomsbury is all about reading and that doesn't just mean the big titles. The Bloomsbury Readers range is designed to help emerging readers build fluency and confidence, and the plethora of titles ensures that young people are drawn into reading through intrigue, not duress.

The Bloomsbury Readers series is packed with brilliant books to get children reading independently in Key Stage 2. The texts are expertly written and cover a number of themes and ideas. They come packed with creative authorship and well-balanced illustrations, making reading the stories engaging and entertaining.

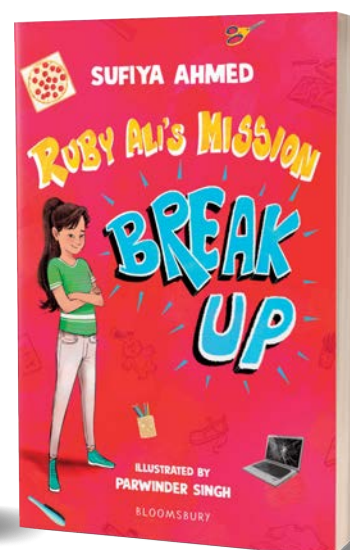
The books are banded by challenge meaning learners can progressively build their skills and confidence whilst exploring the series. Stories are written by award-winning authors like double Carnegie Medal winner Geraldine McCaughrean and Waterstones Prize winner Patrice Lawrence, covering a wide range of genres and topics. The diversity of content is what makes Bloomsbury Readers really stand out. Stories range from fables to Shakespearean reworks and as such, readers are exposed to

sophisticated plots and characters with consistent and clear support.

Each book also comes complete with online guided reading notes written by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), meaning that teachers (and parents) have additional support when it comes to discussion of the texts. Not only does this make for more rich discussion, it also reduces teacher workload. The notes range from general comprehension questions to specific revisits of important passages – they are written to tease out the details of the text.

One of my favourite titles is the rework of *The Tempest* by Franziska G. Ewart. It is an imaginative recreation of one of William Shakespeare's most well-known plays through the voice of Ariel. There is no required prerequisite knowledge of the original play to enjoy the story, however it cleverly builds a familiarity with the setting, context and characters of the popularly taught play. The story comes complete with beautiful black-and-white illustrations by David Wyatt and is perfect for children who are developing as readers.

Bloomsbury Readers are ideal for reading both in the classroom and at home. The series appeals to all emerging readers and the range of titles means that there are texts to suit all tastes and abilities.



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LEADING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

VERDICT

- ✓ Engaging and interesting books to support reading skills
- ✓ Well-crafted and supplementary illustrations work well
- ✓ Supportive and developmental series allowing learners to quickly build confidence
- ✓ Massive range of choice in terms of theme and topic

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a supported and resourced class or individual reading series. Also consider if you are looking to build support at home or target a specific group of learners.

COST

From £4.79 (ebooks) and £5.99 (paperbacks). Full details online.

IRIS Ed:gen Management Information Systems

Streamline school processes and reduce administration

AT A GLANCE

- Next-generation Management Information System (MIS) with game-changing functionality
- Versatile platform for empowering school processes, reducing risk and improving culture
- Streamlined navigation, greater data, and a state-of-the-art all-in-one system
- Modernises communication between all stakeholders
- At your fingertips insights about what is going on in your school with real-time information

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



Simplifying systems, processes and administration is crucial for a complex organisation like a school because it breeds efficiency and makes running your operation slick and professional.

To do that you need a tried, tested and trusted provider of software and services that provide intelligent solutions for harnessing real-time data. Step forward IRIS Ed:gen.

IRIS allows all users in the school ecosystem to establish reliable communication and collaboration channels using an advanced tool called IRIS Ed:gen.

This all-in-one cloud-based MIS improves data visibility and centralises all the professional services needed for the overall operation of your school.

Getting live data means that you are able to see what needs doing fast and so intelligently intervene and make positive changes. It powers an improved school management experience because you see real-time data for registrations, absences and detentions. You can focus on staff wellbeing and performance, improve pupil behaviour through automated workflows and 'star spot' by identifying potential high-flyers.

IRIS Ed:gen also leads to better school safeguarding because the accurate and up-to-date information you get means you can take action early doors.

Engagement and communication across the school community is key and IRIS Ed:gen makes that effortless so you can be sure that no one is left out of the loop and school and home can work in unison to improve pupil outcomes.

A MIS has to be modern, intuitive, easy-to-navigate and work at a pace which pretty much describes IRIS Ed:gen.

It has a single seamless user interface that is clean and fresh with brilliant navigation giving you confidence and control over school tasks. They are a breeze to use because they are so familiar and look like the tech we use in our daily lives.

For example, for teachers there are user-friendly apps to support management and delivery of day-to-day tasks such as internal messages, planners and registrations. Powerful reporting tools help visualise and improve results and feature voice-to-text dictation. As every school is unique, one-size-fits all is not something that applies to school administration which is why you need to invest in a forward-thinking MIS that can adapt to your institution's needs.

IRIS Ed:gen recognises this and its flexible and versatile software can support multiple layers of personalisation because you select the apps and modules that you need which improves your focus and intent.

If you are still using a fragmented IT infrastructure or your ageing EdTech is no longer fit for purpose then IRIS Ed:gen can remove all the heartache and headaches by having everything in one place, not all over the place. IRIS Ed:gen is a secure, configurable, and centralised data information management system with a very impressive suite of apps for the whole school community providing you with a truly holistic view and full control of all administrative, academic, admissions, finance and wellbeing

information. With clear, transparent and competitive pricing, IRIS Ed:gen is best in breed for a joined-up school and something really rather special.

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LEADING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

VERDICT

- ✓ Streamlines school processes and reduces administration
- ✓ Significantly enhances your operational efficiency and communication
- ✓ Make better and more finely-tuned decisions
- ✓ Optimises engagement and promotes social inclusivity
- ✓ Greater insight, consistency and control
- ✓ Save precious time and money and enhance your professional image

UPGRADE IF...

You want an ergonomic MIS you can build and shape to meet your needs and keep things running smoothly so you can get on with the business of providing outstanding education. Cost: see website for further details

NEW FOR SCHOOLS

Support your pupils with this selection of resources, equipment and services



1 GET MORE FROM YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE

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during lunch. Playground canopies provide shelter for outdoors lessons and activities, and entrance canopies provide shelter for guests and parents. Every canopy we install is built using site-specific calculations to guarantee safety and comes with a manufacturer's warranty.

canopiesuk.co.uk

2 FIGHT THE INJUSTICE OF CHILDHOOD CANCER

Start the school term in a positive way by joining our Mini Superhero Challenge! Apply today at superhero.childrenwithcancer.org.uk. Encourage your class or whole school to join our Mini Superhero Challenge this September, as part of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Every penny you raise will help us fund vital childhood cancer research. Children with Cancer UK is the leading national charity dedicated to specialist childhood cancer research. We fund life-saving research to determine the causes, find cures and develop better treatments for children and young people with cancer.

superhero.
childrenwithcancer.
org.uk



4 A FRESH APPROACH TO MIS

IRIS Ed:gen is a fresh approach to school Management Information Systems (MIS), encompassing a suite of next-generation tools that will define the market for years to come. It provides a single source of the truth for educators – collating attendance, attainment and behavioural data and presenting it in an easily digestible format. Staff can even build out dashboards in the school information management system to display all the information that's critical to their individual role. With a huge range of in-system apps and tools, whole-school and MAT-level reporting suites, and an intuitive user interface, IRIS Ed:gen is set to shake up the industry at large. iris.co.uk/iris-edgen



3 MAKING MATHS FUN

The Mathematical Association (MA) is a membership organisation that provides support and promotes confidence and enjoyment in mathematics for all. It focusses on young people through interacting with teachers and those with an interest in mathematics education. The MA provides resources, publications, conferences,

webinars and challenges. The Primary Maths Challenge runs every November, while the First Mathematical Challenge runs between June and July, both aimed at primary school children. The organisation also influences mathematical education policy in evidence-based ways that support the development of a mathematically-enabled, confident and interested population.

m-a.org.uk



7 SAFEGUARDING IN STYLE

An area of great interest to schools is visitor management, not just because of GDPR but also for safeguarding purposes. Highly recommended by many schools is idXtra's visitor management system: VisiTapp. It is user-friendly, flexible and affordable.

VisiTapp helps your school to deal with visitors, contractors and supply teachers and keeps track of who is in the building. If the big red button is pressed, a list of everyone on the premises is instantly sent to key members of staff. For further information, a free demonstration or quotation, call us today on 0800 083 6053 or visit idxtra.com



8 CUT THE ADMIN

Efficiently managing your pre- and after-school clubs can often prove to be a bigger job than initially expected. Kids Club HQ is a cloud-based system built to solve this problem, featuring an online booking system for parents and numerous administration functions for school and club staff.

Automatic invoicing and payment reminders, along with up-to-date registers, mean that schools like yours can save lots of time previously spent on various administrative tasks. For more details, contact hello@kidsclubhq.co.uk.

kidsclubhq.co.uk

5 THE IMPORTANCE OF VENTILATION

Since reopening in March, the message has been strong that schools need to abide by Sir Patrick Vallance's advice of providing good ventilation to help keep infection cases down. As we head into

the warmer months this will be far easier to implement! Here, Fireco's Head of Sales, James Cox, reiterates the importance of good ventilation in schools and describes how Dorgard door retainers can provide effective safety and hygiene measures. fireco.online/22z

6 Curriculum maestro™

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engaging and adaptable projects, resources, assessment and monitoring tools, making it the most complete platform available. Used in over 1,500 primary schools across the UK, Maestro is proving to be a gamechanger for leadership, teaching and learning. For more information call 03333 20 8000.

cornerstoneseducation.co.uk



Are vegans feeling excluded?

Ruth Jenkins asks is there an aspect of inclusion your school is missing?

Thousands of pupils in schools across the UK have an ethical belief protected under the Equality Act 2010, but experience discrimination and exclusion in school every day. Their lifestyle tackles climate change, cares for others and reduces their risk of disease.

This year vegan pupils across the UK have registered over 1,000 of their schools to receive Vegan-Inclusive Education packs in a bid to improve inclusion.

Two-hundred and fifty-two vegan pupils completed a survey capturing their day-to-day school experiences, and the results show a widespread challenge and huge improvement opportunity for schools.

Fewer than 40 per cent of respondents feel welcome as a vegan pupil in their school, and less than 40 per cent feel safe. Only 13 per cent feel valued. If pupils do not feel welcome, safe and valued, they will not be able to learn at their best.

Why might vegan pupils not feel safe?

Pupils need to feel safe to learn effectively, but they will feel unsafe if they are being teased or bullied. Seventy-three per cent of respondents had been teased for their vegan beliefs at school. Of these, 16 per cent were teased by teachers, 12 per cent by other school staff.

Also, 42 per cent of respondents had been bullied because of their vegan beliefs. In this case 13 per cent were bullied by teachers, 12 per cent were bullied by other staff. Only 25 per cent said their school had been swift and helpful to tackle the issue.

Teachers and pupils need clarity: this is

not an acceptable area for disrespect – just as schools have had to include those with different ethnicities, abilities and sexualities in their expanding circle of inclusion. It is a matter of urgency to tackle the fact that in one-in-four incidences it is school staff who are the perpetrators.

Why might vegan pupils not feel welcomed?

Both food and educational approaches can be unintentionally excluding.

Most vegan pupils (54 per cent) had experienced no vegan school meal option. This is unlawful. Sixty per cent had narrow and repetitive options (often jacket potato and beans every day). Forty-eight per cent had no vegan dessert options, and 36 per cent experienced nutritionally unbalanced menus.

Free help is available to improve this. Proveg UK offer pro-bono consultancy supporting the development of plant-based school meal offerings. They are cheaper, massively cut your school's carbon footprint and improve the health outcomes of your pupils. You can contact them now to join the growing group of schools and local authorities taking this positive step towards inclusion, health and sustainability.

Where should you look first for an inclusive curriculum? Pupils felt excluded because of their veganism in cooking (63 per cent), nutrition lessons (48 per cent), school trips (43 per cent), science (33 per cent) and topic work (25 per cent). Most (58 per cent) had been asked to complete work that was incompatible with their vegan beliefs.

Reviewing these key areas makes a massive difference and there is further support available. 'Primary Veducation' is a

consultancy service run by a former teacher and SENCo who specialises in whole staff training sessions, showing how to adapt the statutory curriculum and differentiate for the needs of the vegan children in each setting.

Why might a vegan pupil not feel valued?

Eighty-five per cent of respondents had felt discriminated against because of their vegan beliefs at school. Of those, the most common emotions elicited were:

- Feeling misunderstood (53 per cent)
- Frustration (52 per cent)
- Sadness (51 per cent)
- Heightened sense of difference (49 per cent)
- Anger (40 per cent)
- Anxiety (39 per cent)

More than 25 per cent felt belittled, embarrassed, socially isolated, undervalued, an impaired sense of belonging, powerless and humiliated. Each of these emotions distances the student from the teacher, and from participating effectively in their education.

Over one in 100 people are now vegan in the UK, more common than those identifying as Jewish or Buddhist or Sikh. How many people are in your school? How many of your pupils and staff are vegan? You may well not know, but it is probably time to ask them.

You can download a copy of the Vegan-Inclusive Education pack at vieducation.co.uk, alongside supporting resources.

Ruth Jenkins, Programme Co-ordinator, Vegan-Inclusive Education Ltd, contact@vieducation.co.uk

Spotlight on... visiTapp Visitor Management System

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