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From the editor



Like it or loathe it, the teaching of phonics has been one of the most contentious issues in primary schools for years, dividing opinion among teaching professionals and parents alike. Now, a new study suggests that the government might have been wrong to prescribe it so rigidly, after all. Alice Bradbury and Dominic Wyse, from UCL Institute of Education, outline their latest research with a strong message to teachers – you don't have to focus on phonics!

I have often thought that it takes a brave teacher to broach the tricky issues around sex education, when half the class is cringing and the rest can barely suppress their blushes or giggles. In this issue, RSE expert Alice Hoyle gets to grips with body parts and suggests practical ways of introducing those difficult words into children's vocabulary, without embarrassment.

As technology and hybrid learning are used more and more in everyday teaching and learning, Karine George outlines the importance of including children in discussions about data protection, with useful advice on what shape those conversations might take in the classroom. And sticking with the theme of safety, Graeme Holland explains how new food labelling regulations under Natasha's Law will affect how your school canteen is run.

If you're a new headteacher – or thinking of stepping up – Daniel Woodrow shares first-hand experience and advice on surviving those early days, weeks and months in post, and tackling the challenges of the role head-on. Just don't bank on having a hot lunch any time soon! Even if you've been in the job for a while, there are still times when you need help and support. Kenny Frederick urges governors to be that friendly face, and not to abandon their school leaders in their hour of need – and particularly not after an Ofsted inspection.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dorothy Lepkowska
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February 2022

Our experts this issue



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years teacher



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headteacher,
Sharmans Cross
Junior School



From the makers
of **Teach Primary**

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Preparing colleagues for the big challenges

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CUSTOMER SERVICES:

aceville@dctmedia.co.uk
0800 904 7000

PUBLISHER:

Helen Tudor

PUBLISHED BY: Aceville Publications Ltd,
25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd, Colchester,
Essex, CO2 8JY.
01206 505900

aceville

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“We all need meaning in our work and I have found mine”

Russell Hobby CBE on being introverted, his admiration for primary heads and life at 50

Q. What jobs did you have in your earlier years?

I did various jobs as a sixth former, including being a welder of solar panels, and a cleaner in a local school. My first real job after university was in sales, which I chose specifically because it was frightening to my introverted self. I threw myself into cold-calling people but, in honesty, wasn't very good at it. I became a management consultant for a while before entering the world of education.

Q. Your mum was a primary teacher. What memories do you have of this time and what influence did she have on your future career?

She took up the post when I was about eight years old, after my father died, because it was a job she was good at and could do while raising her children. She was offered the role by my primary head, who knew she was a qualified teacher who had stopped working after having children. She worked there for 20 years until she retired and was very old school and traditionalist. She didn't allow anyone to call her by her first name, which was

fashionable in schools in the '80s, and wouldn't share any personal information, but was much loved and respected her pupils. I grew up with local children coming round to volunteer to walk our dog, which was one mark of a teacher whom pupils took to their hearts. It was also a great start for her future role as a local councillor, as it was impossible to walk through Abingdon without bumping into whole families she had taught: she knew everyone. All she wanted to do was to be a great classroom teacher.

It planted the seeds for my future career because I used to go in as a sixth former and help occasionally. It gave me a sense of the reality of a teacher's job and workload, and I'd see the plastic crates in which she'd bring home the work to mark.

I suppose those actions of my primary head also led me eventually to NAHT. He knew about the children in his school and was aware of what was going on in their families. This level of care isn't something that can be taught on a course or be found in a headteachers' guidebook.

Q Is this what made you apply for the role on NAHT?

Yes, it was partly that earlier experience. I've always had a soft spot for headteachers. They're great people who do such an amazing, but difficult, job and we've really seen that during the pandemic. That sense they have of always being there for the pupils, always their advocate and representative, especially during what was a tumultuous time in education.

I joined NAHT as general secretary around the time that Michael Gove became secretary of state. I was convinced I'd never get the job. I was a management consultant, had never taught and was in my 30s. I believed I could do the job, but I never thought I'd get it. I went into the interview feeling quite relaxed and it must have worked. It was a wonderful seven years.

Q. What were your main achievements at NAHT?

There were three things during my time of which I'm particularly proud. As a union, we moved to prevent no notice inspections which would have meant heads could be ambushed at any time and would have immeasurably added to the stress and unsustainability of the role.

We also set up our Aspire project at a time of threat of enforced academisation for struggling schools. This was a school improvement project that heads signed up for rather than be forced to become an academy against their will, which gave them better outcomes on inspections. NAHT demonstrated a creative and proactive approach to negotiating with the government and showed that schools could improve if they had the space and time.

Thirdly, we set up our NAHT Edge programme for middle leaders and aspiring heads. During my time we modernised the union, used creative methods to defend members and presented some hard opposition to government policies which would otherwise have made the lives of headteachers a lot worse.





Q. Who was your favourite Secretary of State for Education during this time?

I started at the NAHT when Michael Gove was education secretary, and then worked with Nicky Morgan, Justine Greening and Damian Hinds, who was secretary of state towards the end of my time. I particularly liked working with Justine and we did some work with her on assessment. She believed strongly in social mobility.

Q You're now chief executive of Teach First. What role does the organisation have with the changes being proposed for initial teacher training?

There are many good routes to becoming a teacher and there should be lots of different ways because people have different needs and strengths, and no one has a monopoly on quality of supply.

I think there are three things we can add to the bigger picture. Firstly, we want to attract people to join the profession who might not have thought about it and, once they are in, we want to keep them there. About 80% of those who come through Teach First

“I’ve always had a soft spot for headteachers. They do such an amazing, but difficult, job”

continue in the profession after their two years with us, and 60% of all those we trained are still in school – and we’ve been going for 20 years. There are also now nearly 100 headteachers who qualified via the Teach First route.

Secondly, we place them in areas of social deprivation where schools often don’t get enough applicants. We want to get specialist teachers, working in the subjects in which they are qualified, into schools in less affluent parts of the country. Thirdly, we try to connect them with each other, so they are part of a supportive network and community.

Q. Congratulations on your CBE in the New Year’s Honours. What’s next for Russell Hobby?

I’ve just turned 50 as well, so it’s been quite a momentous time. But there are many years to go, I hope!

We are currently reviewing the role of Teach First in the education system. We consider schools to be an agent of change, with a tough job to do, so we need to keep them at the centre of our work. Schools that do not have the resources to fall back on are among those who have suffered the worst in the past two years. So, we need to recommit ourselves to them and ensure we sustain our founding mission of narrowing the education gap and making sure that kids get a brilliant education whatever their background. That goal has taken a knock recently, given the disruption of the pandemic.

Will I stay in education? Yes, I think so. We all need meaning in our work, and I have found mine. Supporting schools and the teaching profession is a great way to achieve that. And it’s a process that started with my mum and has come full circle.

CAREER TIMELINE

1993
Graduated in
PPE from
Corpus Christi
College, Oxford

1994
Started job in
software sales

1998
Began working as a
management
consultant

2010
General secretary of
NAHT

2017
Chief executive of
Teach First

2022
Awarded CBE in
New Year’s Honours

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School Improvement

FIGURING OUT FORMULAS

A whole-trust approach is reaping rewards in maths teaching and learning, says **Helena Palmer**

When it comes to teaching maths, we're creating mathematical thinkers, not calculators, at the Learning Academy Partnership. Our aim is to build on pupils' skills in problem solving and reasoning, and start our maths lessons with a problem to be solved that bears meaning to pupils. Children are encouraged to work together, and at the end of each lesson the class and teacher can collectively share the achievement.

Contrary to popular belief, there isn't just one way of doing things in maths, and we embed this attitude into our teaching. Our Trust puts resilience at the

heart of the maths curriculum, leading with an approach that gets pupils to try and try again, and recognise the journey of a problem. They're applauded for explaining, proving and showing other ways of working – just as they are celebrated for finding the correct answer.

REBUILDING RESILIENCE

Re-entrenching resilience into our pupils' approach to maths has become a top priority at the Trust since school lockdowns. However, there's no silver bullet, fix-all solution. Often people get carried away with an exciting new method,

textbook or idea, but nothing is more important than consistent, high-quality teaching, rooted in our vision to create mathematical thinkers. There needs to be ongoing support from leadership, with structures implemented that go beyond any one school or teacher. Even the strongest maths teachers need to feel that they've got people to lean on, so that they can continue to progress and excel.

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

A central tenet of our maths CPD has been incremental coaching. This is a regular, frequent and ongoing cycle of observation and action-based conversation that helps teachers develop specific aspects of their practice. It keeps the focus of improvement rooted in the classroom and relevant to the individual teacher.

For a term, I coached every Y6 teacher across our schools weekly, going into classrooms and discussing how they could improve. Teachers would then focus on one action each week, making steady improvements, and I was able to identify any gaps in knowledge that needed to be addressed. It also helped teachers to make a gradual shift in their practices with a confidence and certainty around what they were doing, and why. Maths leads in each

“Nothing is more important than consistent, high-quality teaching, rooted in our vision to create mathematical thinkers”



AT A GLANCE

- Embed resilience into your teaching
- Make maths problems meaningful to your pupils
- Create consistent but flexible approaches across your schools/trusts
- Ensure you're using the expertise of the staff around you
- Collaborate with other schools and teachers to develop your approach

of our schools are trained coaches and support colleagues through this process.

PITCHING IN

One of the best things about working in a Trust is being part of a wider team who can all pitch in and lend their support and ideas. The number one thing I'd recommend to any teacher is to make the most of the people around you, and equally for any senior leader or subject lead to ensure that staff expertise is being utilised and a collaborative approach being implemented.

Over the past five years, we've worked on developing a consistent pedagogical approach throughout the Trust for both leaders and teachers. When we began, different academies had very different methods, from the curriculum they were using to the textbooks from which pupils were studying. Through concerted efforts, we're getting everyone on the same page.

We have also created a shared language across the Trust, so everyone understands the rationale. This team approach has been enabled by shared CPD, which has helped teachers to get to know each other. Each academy has a termly development day, but I also bring teachers together to watch lessons and discuss them, thinking through what went well and what could be improved on.

MAKE IT WORTHWHILE

When making changes, our first thought is always 'so what' – we don't implement anything unless we see it being worthwhile. Maths leads also trial any new approaches or resources before they're rolled out more widely across the Trust and champion teachers who regularly innovate.



Helena Palmer is maths lead at the Learning Academy Partnership.

SAVE TIME, AND CATCH BOYS EARLY

Trefor Lloyd advocates early identification and intervention with 'at risk' males



There is an annual media ritual. The publication of GCSE and A level results is followed by press shouts of "Schools Failing Boys".

The usual reasons are rolled out, such as the lack of male role models and peer pressure but, by September, the world has moved on.

Primary schools try to do their bit. We have seen men in childcare targets, more action books, increased outside learning, but a stubborn gap in achievement remains.

If we scrape the statistics a little, we find the top 20% of achievers nationally have as many boys as girls. In contrast, three-quarters of the bottom fifth are males.

The top 20% has more middle-class, Chinese and Indian boys; the bottom 20%, more working-class, Bengali and African-Caribbean boys. We also cannot ignore that of the children with diagnosed special needs, nine-tenths are males.

The headlines shout, 'Boys Lagging Behind'. However, a more precise version might be: "Some boys are doing as well as girls, but take into account class, ethnicity, geography, SEN and poverty. Some boys are dramatically behind some girls, but some girls are not doing so well either."

More accurate, but not so catchy!

IDENTIFYING THOSE AT RISK

If, then, it is only some boys then we need to identify those who are at risk. Early assessments are reliable pointers to future outcomes. The Millennium Cohort Study (2012) identified gaps in cognitive and social and emotional development between children from rich and poor backgrounds at the age of three, with this gap widening by

age five. Primary schools track attendance from age five because early absences are known to lead to truancy and exclusions. We know these differences but don't always act on them.

SO, WHAT CAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS DO?

- Recognise it's some boys. It is not all boys, but those with characteristics that increase their risk of underachievement.
- Recognise that some boys demand a lot of school time - boys often impact on others' learning.
- Invest as children walk through the door - schools recognise the importance of Early Years in teaching learning routines and habits. If schools identify those children and address them during Reception, there will be a significant saving, especially in behaviour management and engagement with learning further up the school.
- Assess and address language as soon as possible - if a child comes into school struggling with language, they will struggle with school generally.
- Use what works - children that struggle with language do not understand code. "Isn't Amelia sitting well?" does not translate to "I should be sitting that way, too" by a low verbal or literal thinking child, who may need a firmer tone and explicit instructions.
- Involve parents - changing habits at home will lead to changes in school. Whatever you are doing to change a habit in class, ask parents to do the same.

Trefor Lloyd is a primary behaviour specialist.

Don't focus on phonics

The government's dogmatic approach to teaching reading is not supported by the evidence, say **Alice Bradbury** and **Dominic Wyse**

As primary headteachers will be all too aware, phonics and its place within the teaching of reading is a contentious and policy-driven topic within early years and KS1.

While Nick Gibb declared the 'reading wars' over, there remain serious differences of opinion between those who propose phonics 'first and fast' and those who favour a more balanced approach. School leaders' ability to make decisions on what is best in their schools is influenced by the Department for Education's limited number of approved phonics schemes, and the requirement from Ofsted that all schools use and stick to a particular scheme.

Nonetheless, there remains some freedom to teach children to read in whatever way the teachers choose, as long as phonics remains a central element.

Teachers under pressure

Our research, including a questionnaire answered by over 2200 teachers, found that the dominant method of teaching reading was focused on synthetic phonics. Of the 634 teachers from nursery, reception, and Year 1 who answered a question about their approach to phonics, 66% (420) said that synthetic phonics was their main focus compared to 1% (9) who said whole texts were seen as the main emphasis and context for teaching reading.

While there are obviously variations in practice, some teachers are clearly under pressure to focus on phonics intensely; one teacher felt that they had to "live and breathe phonics". This dominance marks a shift from decades of practice in the teaching of reading, where being taught the alphabetic code was an important part of, but not the overwhelmingly dominant activity in, learning to read. Practice has been hugely influenced by the introduction of the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1 in 2012, but also by the growth of published phonics schemes, pressure from Ofsted, and requirements in teacher education.

No evidence for current policy

Given this finding, we sought to establish, using a systematic review of the existing research, whether synthetic phonics, as currently required in England, was the most effective method of teaching children to read. We found, as detailed in the most comprehensive paper ever published about



"There should be no over-emphasis on one part of learning to read"

teaching phonics and reading, that the most robust research evidence from randomised control trials with longitudinal designs does not support current policy.

The most rigorous experimental trials have tested children's reading some years after the interventions finished. Studies from Canada and Norway, for example, clearly showed that effective teaching of phonics and reading was delivered by class teachers who combined phonics with teaching of whole texts in literacy lessons. As a result, the gains for children were statistically significant, resulting in them making better progress.

Policy review needed

These findings led us to organise an open letter to the Secretary of State for Education on how reading is taught in England. There is clearly evidence which would support a change in policy, with a move towards 'balanced instruction', where phonics is embedded

with teaching of real texts and includes comprehension activities.

In the meantime, however, there are a number of ways in which headteachers and classroom teachers can use international evidence to support alternative ways of working.

Phonics is increasingly taught as a separate subject from English or literacy, so that the learning of phonemes is divorced from the meaning of words or the pleasure of reading texts. Teaching these together, with the skills intertwined, is a preferable option. Relatedly, preparing children for the phonics screening check should not be a major focus of phonics lessons (though we are obviously aware of the pressures some school leaders are under in relation to statutory testing).

A guiding principle should be that phonics is important, but there should be no over-emphasis on one part of learning to read.



Alice Bradbury is professor of sociology of education and **Dominic Wyse** is professor of early childhood and primary education, at UCL Institute of Education.



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Learning to learn

Introducing young children to metacognitive strategies has clear benefits, writes **Jane Downes**

Metacognition is the mental process which enables learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. But can it really help younger children in the classroom?

The answer is yes. It's never too early to encourage children to take control of their own learning – and that's what metacognition is all about.

To learn successfully, pupils need a range of strategies to tackle tasks, and metacognition happens when pupils reflect on which strategies helped them with a new skill and what they might change next time.

Embedding metacognition into teaching and learning needn't involve huge changes. It's more about tweaking what you're already doing and asking slightly different questions in slightly different ways.

Here's how it might work in a Year 3 lesson on the four times table.

PLANNING

When considering how to learn a new skill, learners are encouraged to think about what they are being asked to do. They review which strategies they would use and whether any strategies they have used before might be helpful.

The teacher introduces the topic and explains there will be a test, which gives the children something to work towards. The teacher asks the children what helped them remember their two-, five- and ten-times tables which they have already learnt.

The children might talk about what they did, such as counting in steps, working in pairs or singing songs.

The teacher then encourages the children to try out different strategies for learning, such as using a number stick, repeating multiplication facts or counting on a number line. The children try out all these strategies while working in pairs.

MONITORING

While learning the skill, children reflect on whether the strategy they have adopted is successful or whether they might need to try an alternative approach.

The teacher sets some questions on the board for the children to answer individually, and the children then mark their own work. The point of this exercise is to help pupils recognise how helpful their learning strategies were.

This is an opportunity for a pause in the learning where the children stop and take stock of their strategies and discuss them with other pupils.

The teacher supports the children in monitoring their work by asking them to mark each learning strategy with a red dot in the margin if they felt it wasn't helpful, or a green dot if the strategy has helped and they would carry on using it.

Many children find it challenging to change a strategy if the one they have chosen is not successful, and pupils may need reassurance that it is fine to say that they didn't find a number line helpful and they prefer to repeat the multiplication facts in their head.

It's a good opportunity for the teacher to explain that the system they find helpful might not be the same for the person they are sitting next to.

EVALUATION

Once the skill has been mastered, teachers ask learners to reflect on the effectiveness of the strategy they chose

in order to identify approaches which could be used in other, different contexts.

At this point, pupils should be reminded about the objective, which in this case is learning the four times table for a test. Pupils then agree what success looks like for them. For some, it might be to get the answer to eight times four correct, for others it might be about getting nine out of 10 right answers.

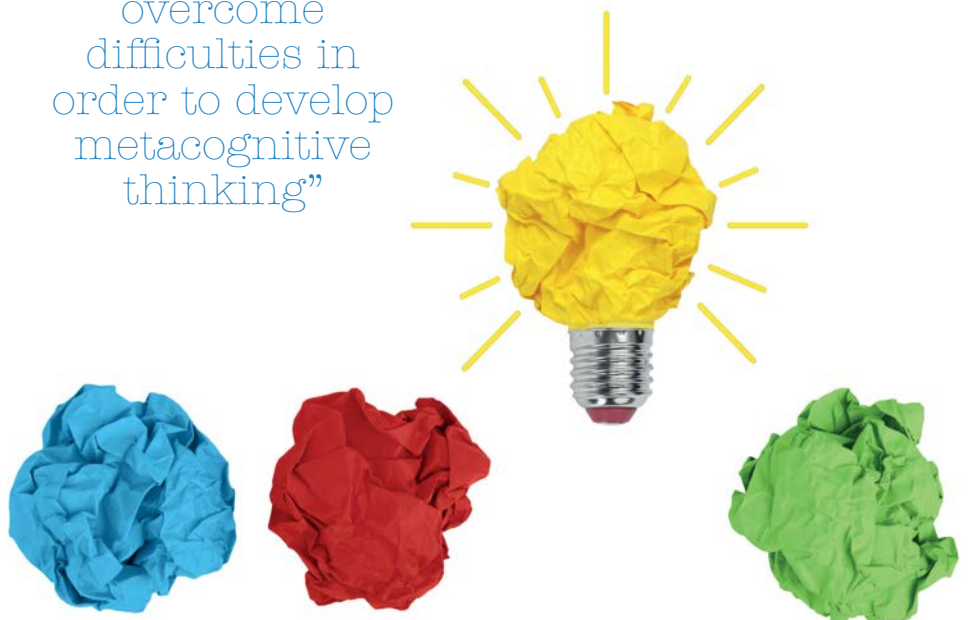
Pupils mark their own work in the test and reflect on how successful they have been. If they were successful, they should consider which strategy they used and when else it might help them, such as for learning their eight times table or their spellings. If they were not successful, pupils should think about which other method might help next time.

Reflection is at the heart of metacognition, and pupils need to experience opportunities to struggle and overcome difficulties in order to develop metacognitive thinking. Even the youngest children can gain important understanding about their own learning, and apply this understanding, when they tackle new skills.



Jane Downes is a teaching and learning adviser for Juniper Education
(junipereducation.org)

“Pupils need to experience opportunities to struggle and overcome difficulties in order to develop metacognitive thinking”



VISIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

Deborah Saunders outlines how An Darah Trust put in place a new programme to help pupils understand how they learn

The An Daras Trust was formed in 2014 as two schools, and now comprises eight primary schools across Devon and Cornwall. As we evolved, we noticed that most pupils were passive learners. We asked ourselves why – and then undertook some research.

Our evidence showed that pupils were predominantly passive because they were not actively engaged in the learning process. Analysis of achievement data also highlighted variation from school to school, particularly for vulnerable groups. There were differences in pupils' experience, pupil voice and their ability to talk about learning.

EXPECTATIONS

As with learning, there was no shared understanding of what makes a great teacher. The one-size-fits-all model was not the solution.

The Trust needed a long-term approach to ensure changes were firmly embedded and we wanted to draw from current educational research. We embarked on the Visible Learning programme with Osiris Educational in 2016, supported by training consultant Wendy Delf. Why did we choose an existing school improvement programme rather than develop one from scratch? Largely because it gave us structure, a 'glue' to hold together all the key elements that would help us improve, but was not prescriptive. Importantly, it allowed us to maintain a commonality but with an opportunity for schools to grow in their own way. Each school could retain its unique identity within the shared understanding of the Trust.

It would also allow us to maintain the principles long after the two-year programme had ended. The Visible Learning programme utilises the meta-analyses of John Hattie which meant that any approaches we undertook would be founded on sound research evidence.

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

The evidence gathered from the programme's initial capability assessment told us there were some key areas for change:

- We needed to move passive learners to active and engage learners.

- The schools needed an agreed and shared professional development programme that would provide them with a structure and format to use beyond the programme.
- We had to develop consistent approaches to teaching and learning.

IMPLEMENTATION

The starting point was in the professional learning accessed by heads prior to introduction in our schools. This enabled us to build capacity and shared understanding, ensuring high levels of readiness when we launched the programme.

So, what did we have to do to improve our learners' experiences?

1. At system level we introduced the following:

- A Trust improvement plan was created based on a review of the previous year's/ school's academy improvement plans

and in consultation with school leaders. This ensured consistency and continuity as well as triangulating professional development and resource needs.

- Targets were set within performance management processes for all school staff, linking to the academy and Trust improvement plan, to ensure delivery of key performance indicators.
- We established a Trust improvement lead. As the Visible Learning Journey evolved, the Trust recognised the need to create this role to coordinate the programme, including signposting schools to each other and communicating key messages.



“There was no shared understanding of what makes a great teacher. One size fits all was not the solution”

- Recruitment – we decided we would use the principles of Visible Learning to inform the process of recruitment at all levels.

The Trust prioritised the time and resources to facilitate implementation, allowing leaders and teachers to focus on the key elements that make a difference to the learning of pupils.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

We also had to develop a shared understanding of the learner experience across our Trust and what makes a great teacher.

2. At middle and senior leadership level we:

- Identified the development of middle leaders through the ‘impact coach’ role. The coaches developed their own school action plans, built the capacity of support staff and were involved in succession planning for new staff at all levels.
- Created a research-based platform for leadership and professional development.
- Created a platform for signposting resources and good practice.
- Developed formats and systems for monitoring, establishing the ‘five star model’ as a process for triangulation of evidence.

3. At teacher level we:

- Shared professional development –the Trust has a structure to bring all schools together for shared professional development and as well as in-school staff development. Schools have their own Visible Learning staff meeting time to deliver and implement aspects of their action plans and training.
- Implemented consistency in approach to documentation, enabling a shared language. The Trust has supported schools to review planning documentation, created learning environments to ensure more effective use of learning walls, and put in place smarter evidence collection tools, which focus on learners’ outcomes rather than teaching coverage.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

Our Visible Learning journey has enabled the Trust and schools to:

- Keep clarity and consistency across the Trust settings by creating a shared and common understanding of the learner experience and the role of the teacher to achieve this.
- Ensure that practices support pupils to develop progressively as independent learners.
- Significantly develop leaders and teachers’ development in professional practice.
- Significantly develop the impact of middle leadership through the role of ‘impact coaches’.
- Maintain and raise achievement gains and pupil outcomes.
- Enhance our work on other essential approaches such as maths mastery and vocabulary instruction.

This approach has not conflicted with any of our other key improvement focuses. In fact, it has only made us smarter in what we implement and how we measure impact.

It has enabled us as leaders to focus on the learner experience. We now have

WHAT CHANGES HAVE WE SEEN?

The greatest impact across all of the schools has been on pupils’ attitude towards learning and pupil voice. Pupils of all abilities are able to talk confidently about their learning using a shared language. They can describe the learning journey they are on, what they need to do to improve and, most importantly, how they are going to improve. They are able to articulate their next steps and how to access support. There is a real buzz around learning throughout all of the schools.

Ofsted noted in 2019 that “pupils are taught to become resilient and resourceful learners. Staff provide pupils with access to different resources they can use should they get stuck. Pupils talked about the usefulness of the ‘stuck-unstuck ladder’. This helps pupils to work through a series of steps to help them move forward. Consequently, pupils are not overly dependent on teachers because they resolve their own difficulties”.

collaboration embedded at every level with leaders taking responsibility, rather than being directed from above. Our cultural change model has shown evidence of achievement growth and continues to have long term impact.

The drive for development of shared understandings within a coherent framework has ensured higher clarity. This has resulted in greater consistency within and across schools. Professional learning within and in addition to the Visible Learning programme has ensured the building of capacity to enable all schools to align with the Trust’s vision. Impact has been recognised by external monitoring bodies, as six out of eight schools have had an Ofsted during the Visible Learning journey. All have achieved a Good outcome, and two have moved from Requires Improvement to Good.



Deborah Saunders is a Trust Improvement Officer at An Daras Trust in Cornwall/Devon.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR AUTISTIC STUDENTS

Stephanie Smith outlines why newly-opened Cavendish School uses the International Baccalaureate to teach youngsters with autism

Official government data shows that there are more than 160,000 autistic students in schools across England; 70% of whom are in mainstream schools while the rest are in specialist provision, home-schooled or out of education completely. However, one in four children with autism wait more than three years to receive the support they need at school, according to the National Autistic Society (NAS), while three-quarters of parents surveyed by the NAS say their child's school did not fully meet their needs.

The pandemic has also had an adverse impact on autistic students; 44% of parents think their child has fallen behind with work and 59% are concerned that their child has become more socially isolated.

In 2016, there were less than 2000 children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder in Cambridgeshire, now there are over 4000. The idea of The Cavendish School was conceived in 2016 to provide accessible provision for students, aged 8 – 18, whose needs cannot be catered for within Cambridgeshire's mainstream state provision. The school aims to provide a continuous educational experience for students until they leave education.

The International Baccalaureate is more usually associated as an alternative to A-levels but we chose to pursue accreditation as an International Baccalaureate (IB) Word School because the primary years and middle years programmes, and then the diploma and career-related programmes, offer a continuous learning journey for students. Importantly, it is also particularly flexible in meeting the needs of autistic students by teaching them skills for life, instead of finite facts.

CHALLENGE

Mainstream education can present multiple barriers to education for students with autism and the challenges include:

- understanding the hidden learning embedded in the National Curriculum;
- creating connections between their learning in different subjects;
- the need to develop their cognitive comprehension.

We believe the IB offers the best curricula

to break down the barriers to education that autistic students regularly face and helps them become independent self-advocates who are fully immersed in their communities.

DISSOLVING BOUNDARIES TO LEARNING

Implicit learning within the National Curriculum, often known as the 'hidden curriculum', is a consistent challenge for students with autism as they struggle to develop life skills that are not actively taught in a school, such as societal cues and values and beliefs conveyed in a social environment. It is because of this that autistic students need to be taught how to transfer knowledge from one subject to the next, and how to apply what they are learning to real world situations.

The IB's primary years programme uses transdisciplinary themes to organise learning and teaching around the construction of meaning in real world situations, to dissolve the boundaries between traditional disciplines and to give students the tools to take meaningful action in the wider world as a result of their learning.

TAILORED LEARNING

A common trait of autistic young people is their intense focus on a small number of core interests that consume their attention, sometimes to the detriment of engagement with their learning.

The flexibility of IB programmes enables teachers to connect students' interests with the subject material to create an irresistible invitation to learn. For example, Thomas the

"The IB meets the needs of autistic students by teaching them skills for life, instead of finite facts"

Tank Engine is a powerful gateway to exploring broad topics that remain engaging and accessible to autistic students as a result of their affinity for the series. Every character in the world of Thomas the Tank Engine has defined responsibilities and there is a clear hierarchy that demonstrates the success of the community when each individual performs their role.

Creating connections between the important roles of each engine, their strengths and their weaknesses, facilitates understanding of a collective and an individual's impact on a community because students learn the value they add to society by being their authentic selves. Harold the Helicopter is often perceived as noisy, but is always welcome; this observation contributes to a broader conversation about embracing your individuality and being welcomed within your community.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

It's often the case that students with autism tend to compartmentalise their learning within subjects. Interdisciplinary study allows students to make connections between different areas of learning, and to develop appropriate transferable skills – such as

DON'T FORGET:

- Remember that autistic students struggle to infer information from social cues and need explicit examples and explanations to use as reference points
- Use a student's interests to engage them with their learning
- Shift your focus from teacher-led to student-led learning

SUCCESS BEYOND SCHOOLING

Progressing to university, joining the workforce and being able to actively participate in society is challenging for some students with autism as they may not have successfully recognised and developed the attributes they need to succeed outside of the classroom.

Alongside academic knowledge, the IB focuses on the development of the whole student, an essential element of which is the IB learner profile; 10 core characteristics that are vital for intellectual, personal and social growth, regardless of neurodiverse or neuro-typical development. Ethical qualities, such as caring, and practical qualities – for instance, communication – are embedded within the framework to prepare students for independent living and community integration. We aim to give them the ability to solve problems, make decisions and work as part of a team.

Since we welcomed our first cohort of students in September 2021, parent feedback has demonstrated the impact of explicit learning and student-led, skills-focused education. We have seen that our students are more comfortable with queuing, time-keeping and sharing. Relationships are being built, which is hugely encouraging for our children who have transitioned from home-schooling, and is evidence that our students are improving their social-cognitive skills to understand their own, and others', desires, beliefs and emotions.



**Stephanie Smith is
Deputy Headteacher of
The Cavendish School,
Cambridgeshire.**

communication, research and independence – to support successful progression towards their own education and adulthood goals.

Using thematic learning, the primary years programme in particular provides a framework for learners to create connections between a theme, a core subject and its relevant applications outside of the classroom.

By inverting the traditional linear method of education, IB students begin their learning with a generalised line of inquiry that facilitates a deeper understanding of the correlation between concept and context, because the generalisation is explicit. For example, our students are exploring the hypothesis that a person's identity changes throughout their life by following the character development of Neville Longbottom in the Harry Potter series. To begin with, Neville lacks confidence in himself but the belief of his friends and teachers helps him develop his confidence and thrive after the battle of Hogwarts. This enables students to create connections between their own experiences and what they are learning at school.

“Reusable, great value and budget-friendly”

Fiona Gold explains how to use Ten Minute Box interventions to support your pupils



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Five Minute Box targeted interventions are designed to support those children who need it most and help identify potential traits of dyslexia or dyscalculia early on. Established over 15 years ago and regularly updated, Five Minute Box interventions are used widely in primary, secondary and special education sectors.

What is the Ten Minute Box?

We have two boxes designed to teach synthetic phonics. The Five Minute Literacy Box gives children a solid foundation by teaching them the first sounds of the English language, while the Ten Minute Box teaches the next stage of phonics learning: digraphs. Lessons follow the same routine so you can efficiently focus on the objective, rather than the format. Each digraph is taught over two lessons, to reinforce learning and provide the opportunity to learn six words containing the digraph.

Why are digraphs challenging for some learners?

Digraphs can be particularly challenging for younger children and can continue to cause problems for older learners, especially if they have a specific learning difficulty or other additional needs. First, they need to recognise two letters (like 'ch') are a digraph, then they must remember that 'ch' stands for the sound /ch/. Finally, they must apply that knowledge to decoding words. Until digraphs are grasped, pupils' ability to read accurately and fluently will be compromised, and their comprehension and vocabulary development impaired.

Who is it suitable for?

Any learner who has mastered single sound phonics but has difficulties recognising digraphs and blending sounds. This may include those showing signs of dyslexia, SLCN, dyspraxia or those with EAL, among other learning differences. Ten Minute



Box is appropriate for any age of learner. Students who find it hard to memorise sounds are helped by learning through all the senses. Lessons can be taught by TAs, teachers or SENCOs.

What makes it an easy resource to implement?

The Ten Minute Box uses the same structure to teach digraphs as Letters and Sounds, so it sits well alongside class-based learning. Once purchased, there are no ongoing costs



ABOUT FIONA:
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or subscriptions, making it reusable, great value and budget-friendly. Everything you need is in the box to maximise your teaching time. Sessions can be timetabled for individual learners on a regular basis. You don't need the Five Minute Literacy Box to implement the Ten Minute Box.

How can progress be tracked?

The Ten Minute Box allows you to record both qualitative and quantitative information on student progress. Detailed initial and summative assessments are included and these can be administered in sections, according to the learner's attention and listening abilities. The assessments are easily adapted to the level of each student, ensuring no gaps in learning. A record of achievement allows professionals to monitor student progress in small increments on a session-by-session basis.

Need to know

- + Ten Minute Box is suitable for learners from KS1 up to and including secondary school.
- + Open the box, read the instruction manual and you're ready to go – no photocopying or searching for resources.
- + Trial any Five Minute Box intervention for free and see the results.

The poison called Ofsted

Fundamental changes are needed to the way we inspect schools, says **Tim Brighouse**

The education system needs some major reform. As the pandemic recedes, getting English schools 'back to normal' will not be enough. Why?

I have seen some amazing practices in my professional lifetime in education, but also the reverse. The key determinant is the teacher; who, as Ginot said, "has the power to humour or humiliate, hurt or heal" and each day "sets the climate in the classroom and creates the weather".

WEAVING MAGIC

Researchers say the 'teacher effect' is more significant than the 'school effect'. This is affected by the character and behaviour of the leadership, particularly the head. They in turn are affected by the MAT and/or the local authority.

Then there is Ofsted and the Department for Education, and regulations and practices beyond the school. Some influences are not for the better.

THE 39 STEPS

In our book 'About Our Schools: Improving on Previous Best', Mick Waters and I argue for fundamental change.

We collected evidence from secretaries of state, special advisers, officials and others who influence policy, including heads of Ofsted, MATs, headteachers, teachers, parents, and governors. From that we proposed six foundation stones for a better schooling system, together with what we have called the 'thirty-nine steps' necessary to remove the poisons outside the school which can affect its classrooms.

INSPECTIONS

Ofsted is a good place to start. You might think that if all the secretaries of state, irrespective of party, agree about something it must be right? Well, the only thing they agreed on was keeping Ofsted in its present form. Almost all other witnesses thought inspection reform was essential.

Ofsted and test results make school accountability what Steve Munby, formerly of the National College for School Leadership, called "the fiercest accountability system with the direst consequences of any [in the world]."

Michael Wilshaw – remember him? – confessed "There were a lot of complaints about the inconsistency of inspectors and deep down I knew they were right..."



"Continually looking over your shoulder is no way to run good schools"

inspectors relied too heavily on data to make their judgements".

Amanda Spielman, the current Ofsted CEO, introduced a new Ofsted framework (2019) requiring schools to show curriculum 'intent'. This translates at primary level to twice as many schools losing their 'outstanding' label than their secondary counterparts.

Some witnesses said branding schools as 'outstanding' was no longer appropriate and encouraged schools to show inspectors what they think they want to see. Inspectors then have to change their rules to overcome the consequences that they inadvertently caused.

FEEDING THE MACHINE

We also explore the 'panoptic' effect of inspection. Early prisons employed warders to ensure guards were effective and built watchtowers to check the warders were being checked by lookout – and now link CCTV to watchtowers to make sure the lookouts are looking. This managerialism is replicated in schools where leaders watch teachers so they can prove they have done so when someone comes to watch them.

This ensures compliance with policy but risks reduced professionalism. We are constantly 'feeding the machine' with managerial data which is not needed. Too often school leaders seek evidence when they are actually shedding light on themselves.

OVERHAUL

We outline an accountability overhaul involving partnerships of 20-30 schools serving a local area being Ofsted-inspected every four or five years. This would examine both their success in school improvement – defined more widely than simply academic attainment metrics – and take into account the inclusivity of schools in the partnership.

The process would involve two schools within the partnership being inspected, one nominated by the partnership and one by Ofsted and the starting point for each would be the partnership's own evaluation of their respective strengths and weaknesses. This would ascertain the partnership's quality assurance measures.

Exams and tests would be nationally set, marked within the partnership and regionally moderated using digital processes. Partnerships would have a licenced assessor and, if found wanting, would have their licence suspended until their quality improved. The accountability focus would move from individual schools to the partnership.

MOVING TO AMBITION AND HOPE

We propose many more reforms as we move from one schooling age dominated by markets, centralisation and managerialism to a better one of ambition, hope and collaborative partnerships where we measure against our own previous best.



Tim Brighouse was a chief education officer in Oxfordshire and Birmingham and leader of the London

Challenge. Co-author Mick Waters is a former government adviser, headteacher and teacher educator. Use the code AOS to get a 20% discount off About Our Schools on the Crown House Publishing website: crownhouse.co.uk.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

Starting to talk about jobs early will improve children's career options later, says **Katy Hampshire**

Some children seem instinctively to know what they want to be from a very young age. My mum was one – a born teacher, she knew it from primary school and she had a long and successful career teaching maths to secondary school students. I wasn't so sure about my future career, but her influence on the importance of education and inspiring young people had an impact on me.

Many children don't have the same access to role models representing a variety of jobs. I've heard numerous times over the past year from headteachers about children who have limited ideas about the range of possibilities open to them outside of their immediate neighbourhood. For example, children in cities who struggle to write comprehensive exercises involving a 'forest' because they haven't been to one.

TALK ABOUT CAREERS, ENHANCE LEARNING

Children are exposed to the world of work constantly, learning about jobs throughout primary school and even before – through TV shows, family members, books and simply through their own experiences. They often just see a narrow range of roles, for example, a police officer, doctor and teacher.

Children develop perceptions about jobs and those who do them, so we should ensure that any exploration is done in a careful, considered way that does not reduce the world of work to a few roles done by a few people. It must broaden children's views and ideas about the opportunities and options available to them.

Understanding the world of work, sometimes referred to as 'career-related learning' is not about providing careers advice, and it's not the same as the careers learning at secondary school. It's not about choosing a pathway, defining a career goal or making any decisions about the future at all, but instead seeks to remove barriers and promote an open, positive attitude to different opportunities.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

Children start to develop ideas about what they can and can't be from primary school age

and it's here that gaps can start to widen between those who have access to a wide range of role models and those that don't.

Primary school is also where children can start to close down options for themselves, either because they just don't know about them or because they develop pre-conceived notions of who can do certain jobs. This can mean some children are unable to see the relevance of learning or particular subjects.

In the UK, and internationally, the evidence is clear: the OECD has found that children as young as five already base their 'dream jobs' on gender norms, and the 2018 Drawing the Future report, which surveyed thousands of children from across the

world, showed that seven-year-olds are forming stereotypes about the jobs people can do based on their ethnicity and socio-economic background.

Seeing role models from different backgrounds doing a range of jobs counters damaging stereotypes and shows children that their futures need not be dictated by what is commonly shown in the media or what they see around them. When a female engineer goes into a school to tell children about her job, it doesn't just show girls that they can work in a male-dominated sector, but it shows boys that women are successful in all different jobs and challenges pre-conceived ideas.



BRINGING LEARNING TO LIFE

Enriching the curriculum with career-related learning helps to bring real-life context to schoolwork and improves children's understanding of the importance of doing well in English, maths and science. Following a career-related learning activity, one pupil said: "Meeting the volunteers has given me courage to know that I can make lots of things. I have also found out about lots more jobs. I think it gave me a boost in maths. If you're engineering, you need to know your numbers, so I had better learn them!"

This is all the more important in the context of the pandemic. "A key part of the solution to the post-Covid education recovery and challenging stereotypes is giving children access to role models from the world of work", explains Karen Giles, headteacher at Barham Primary in Wembley. "These role models can inspire, motivate and help children see why education is relevant."

Virtual learning practices have also opened up new ways of connecting with people from the world of work, enabling children to broaden their network of role models even further – a school in

rural Cornwall can connect with a researcher in Edinburgh, and children in London can learn about agriculture from a volunteer in Yorkshire. Virtual encounters offer a glimpse into areas of life children otherwise may not have the chance to explore through school trips: for example, a pilot might bring their laptop into an aeroplane cockpit, or a museum curator might show children a special archived collection.

RELATABLE ROLE MODELS

By opening up the circle of influences and role models, children gain a broader understanding of the opportunities they could strive towards and how they could use their talents and skills.

Meeting relatable role models enables children to see success within reach for themselves, whereas meeting people with different, unfamiliar stories they wouldn't usually encounter offers a window into new opportunities they hadn't previously considered. This helps to instil self-belief and a positive attitude towards the future, where children think, "I could do that too".

Widening access to these kinds of networks can benefit social mobility – and research points to career-related learning having an

GETTING STARTED WITH CAREER-RELATED LEARNING

- **Start small:** inviting one volunteer to talk to a class of children about their job can be just as effective as a large-scale event, and allows for valuable interaction.
- **Find role models from the community:** invite a parent or local businessperson to talk about their job. People are often pleased to be asked to share their stories and engage with children, and community links can develop further benefits beyond career-related learning.
- **Access ready-made resources** if you want to gauge children's response before arranging a live chat with a volunteer, such as videos introducing people with different jobs.
- **Organise virtual activities** to complement project work – with our programme, Primary Futures, you can search thousands of volunteers across the country from a huge range of backgrounds.

even greater benefit for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Learning about jobs from a young age broadens children's aspirations; it helps to remove limits they may have placed on their potential and shows them exciting futures to which they could aspire. Take this quote from a child after meeting volunteers who talked about their careers: "My brother doesn't have a job but when I grow up, I want to be really happy. I am going to be a really busy man! I could be a doctor, vet, builder, baker, artist, shopkeeper or chef! I can't decide yet."



Katy Hampshire is the director of operations and programmes at Education and Employers, a charity working to improve young people's life chances. The charity runs Primary Futures (Primaryfutures.org), a free programme enabling state primary schools to connect with a wide network of volunteers in different jobs.





“IT SAYS PELVIS, MUMMY!”

RSE Expert Alice Hoyle argues the importance of teaching young children the correct name for their body parts

Some years ago, my then Year 1 daughter came home with a beautifully labeled diagram of “My body”. I did a double take at one of the labels pointing to the midsection and gently said, “But sweetheart... um... you don't actually have a penis, you have a vulva!”

She looked at me in disgust and said, “Pelvis, Mummy. It says pelvis!”

I asked her if she had covered penis or vulva at school and she couldn't remember. For me, something has gone a bit awry.

This is not a new problem. When I was about six or seven years old, I was reading the leaflets in the GP's waiting room. “Mummy, what's a 'Virginia?'” I asked in all innocence. “It's a type of plant,” came my mother's rather flustered response.

“No, Mummy. It says you need to rub cream in.” I was reading a leaflet about thrush. My mother's blushing yet glaring response of “It's a woman's willy!” taught me much about such attitudes at a young age.

How can we possibly think it is okay to teach five or six year-olds complicated words like pelvis, femur, and tibia and not teach them the absolute basics of their external body parts?

Partly it is rooted in sexism. Let's consider the words that children use for their genitals. How many are there for boys - and how many for girls? For boys, we are comfortable with willy or penis, but girls have a confusing and euphemistic plethora of incorrect terms, like minnie, twinkle, noo noo, and front bottom.

This squeamishness around body parts - and particularly the word vulva - means parents and teachers avoid giving children the vital names and necessary understanding about their own bodies. This sets children (particularly girls) up for a sense of shame.

DON'T BE SQUEAMISH

Even the government is not immune from this reluctance explicitly to name body parts. The statutory RSE guidance (2019) states “At key stages 1 and 2, the National Curriculum for science (2015) includes teaching about the main external parts of the body” so you might think this means vulva and penis as a minimum.

However, when you cross reference with the actual text within the science National

Curriculum, the statutory guidance states “identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body” with the non-statutory detail unhelpfully listing “including head, neck, arms, elbows, legs, knees, face, ears, eyes, hair, mouth, teeth”.

If I had written the guidance, it would explicitly state we need to teach penis and vulva as a minimum in KS1. And by early KS2 (by the end of Year 4), this would go to cover penis, testicles, vulva and uterus; building up to penis, testicles, scrotum, sperm duct; and vulva, labia, clitoris, vagina, uterus, ovaries and egg duct by the end of Year 6.

SAFEGUARDING

The strongest argument for using the correct words is safeguarding. I know of a child abuse case where the abuser called his penis a “lollipop” and since no one would think twice about a child talking about lollipops, the abuse took much longer to be uncovered.

In another case, a father was apparently investigated by police for months after his daughter said: “Daddy hurt my noo noo”. Noo Noo, it turned out, was her toy rabbit – which her father had put in the wash.

Jock Mickshik, specialist social worker in child sexual abuse, with over 25 years’ experience of assessing and treating sex offenders, told me that: “Predators tend to avoid children who have an accurate, working language for their body parts and are

confident and articulate in telling adults if something untoward is happening to them.

“Conversely, offenders are more likely to exploit those children with little or no awareness of their bodies, who are less able to disclose what is going on.”

In trying to keep children innocent and safe, we may actually be doing the exact opposite.

“In trying to keep children innocent and safe, we may actually be doing the exact opposite”

LEARNING ABOUT ANATOMY

We also have to think about this in terms of laying the foundations of anatomy, with a view to scaffolding how children learn through their school years and into adult life.

We have girls starting their periods in Years 4/5, without being taught about menstruation. As a secondary science teacher, I could always tell which primary schools covered basic anatomy and reproduction well, and those

that didn’t. Many Year 7 children still thought that babies either came out of a woman’s anus or urethra – although “bum” or “where you wee from” was the language they tended to use.

Many women still refer to “down there” when discussing medical problems with a healthcare professional. Talking about body parts without shame or embarrassment from a young age means that children grow up feeling comfortable with their own bodies, and are more able to seek help when they need it.

USE THE RIGHT WORDS

Schools should review when and how they teach the correct names of the body parts. Let’s ensure children understand that their bodies are brilliant and awesome, and that there is always a trusted adult who can help them if they are worried or scared.



Alice Hoyle is a Relationships and Sex Education Advisory Teacher and Youth Worker and co-author of Great Relationships and Sex Education: 200+ Activities for Educators Working with Young People. She is available for training and support for Primary schools and can be contacted on alice.t.hoyle@gmail.com.

GETTING TERMINOLOGY RIGHT

- Conversations about agreed school terminology and rationale for its use should include your whole staff, including teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors. Practise saying penis and vulva confidently in a safe space before you say it in the classroom!
- Contextualise where you might need to use the words. For example, when discussing toileting with children in Early Years or KS1, decide if you are going to mirror the child’s language or introduce the correct words.
- Agree as a staff that you will not introduce your own inaccurate terms to the children, or sanction the children for using the correct words in the correct context.
- Get your parents on board - explain the rationale to them, support them to use the words with a range of books (some are better than others and none of them are perfect) such as *Nude Isn’t Rude* and *My Underpants Rule*. Jayne Sanders’ books on body safety education, including *No Means No* and *My body! What I Say Goes* are also helpful. Have copies available at school for parents to review and decide which ones might work best for their child at home.
- The videos from the Amaze.org support how to answer “Where do babies come from?” and “How are babies made?” The short clips show parents and educators the importance of using the correct words and answering questions in an age-appropriate way.
- The Pantosaur materials (and the earworm of a song) are a safe starting point for children and their parents to start talking about how we name what is under our pants.
- Use the simple labelling diagrams from Education Scotland’s Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood website (tinyurl.com/htmybody). You can colour code the drawings in terms of private parts of the body, and talk about where it is okay, and not okay, for people to look at and touch.
- Some schools, depending on their context, choose to use the language of ‘most’ not ‘all’ (e.g. most girls have a vulva) when talking about sex differences, to make discussions more inclusive for children who might be gender diverse.
- If you need build your confidence using the word ‘vulva’ then Brook publishes a leaflet called “What is a Vulva anyway?”
- Separate teaching about the clitoris from teaching about FGM, which is often covered in Year 6 in at-risk populations. The first time a girl learns about a clitoris should not be in the context of it being cut or removed.



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away by what the
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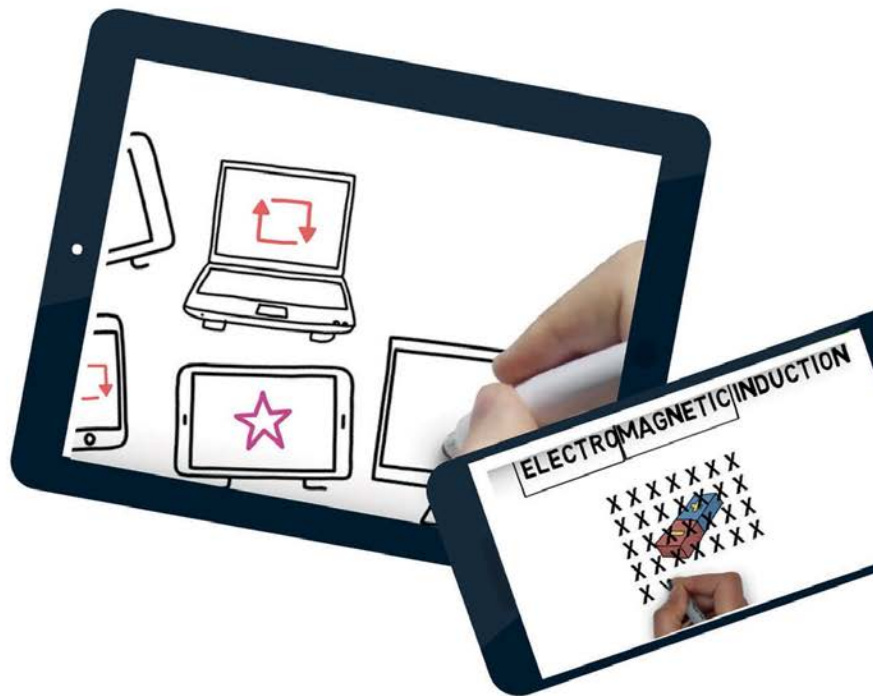
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Buildings and Procurement

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

When your mouse is hovering over the 'buy now' button, be sure to run through this checklist, says **Ed Fairfield**

The key question you must ask whenever you're considering a purchase is, "Will this help me achieve a specific listed objective in my ICT strategy? Can I define how?" If the purchase you have in mind doesn't pass the test, think again.

A classic example is when a school purchases a replacement entry-level classroom projector – by doing so, they're perpetuating inadequate provision, rather than moving things forward. Or else they might get excited by a tempting summer term offer for 30 flipcams – in this instance, what's the 'why'?

EARN THE TRUST OF YOUR END USERS

Without prior warning, the school is suddenly the recipient of a pallet of shiny new edtech. Said edtech's intended users – usually teachers – will be curious, but also wary of the unknown. They'll likely have some concerns around changes to their workload and expectations. Without meaning to, the school has immediately created a barrier.

The important takeaway here is to consider your end users. Make sure you consult them, perhaps using a user survey, focus group or simply via face-to-face conversations. Take care to involve them, maybe by sending updates on how the purchase decision is progressing, and/or inviting them to view a demonstration prior to a decision being made.

*"Be demanding!
Ask for evidence
of any claims.
Insist on training,
drill down into
their knowledge
and ensure you're
given options"*

Above all, share your plan with them. When a purchasing decision is made, announce it to the school and invite feedback. That way, when the shiny pallet turns up, your colleagues will be more willing to embrace it.

EXERCISE VIGILANCE

It's entirely possible for a company representative to sound charming and knowledgeable on the phone, win the trust of a school and succeed in making a sale.



Due diligence remains essential, though. You could start by searching for examples of the company's past successes, or ask for a reference from a school similar to yours. If the company can't point to its prior achievements, look elsewhere.

Some companies may display certain 'badges of honour', such as being partnered with a widely-recognised manufacturer or developer. Look for any education-themed awards and preferred supplier agreements with MATs and public sector organisations. See if the company is included on any procurement frameworks, such as Crown Commercial Service or YPO.

Moreover, do they speak your language? Do they understand your needs as their customer? Does it look as though they've spread themselves thinly, perhaps supplying businesses operating in spaces other than education? Will that affect the service they can offer you?

Be demanding! Ask for evidence of any claims, insist on training, drill down into their knowledge and ensure you're given options.

ASK ABOUT TRAINING

How will your school get best value from the edtech solution it has chosen and maximise its use?

Before it was abolished, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) recommended that 20% of ICT spend be dedicated to training. My experience as a supplier is that schools aren't prepared to fund anywhere near that – and having seen some suppliers' provision, I can see why.

There is, however, good training to be had out there, which schools should insist on having. Before ordering, consider the training dimension. What will be included in your purchase? Is it developed with teachers in mind? Will it be formative, or consist of a basic one-off session? Can the provider offer support for training an in-house champion? Will there be separate support for your own ICT team?

With all that in mind, perhaps the single biggest question you should ask yourself is this: "Do I have a long-term, supported plan to ensure this technology will help me deliver better education?"



Ed Fairfield is the vice chair of Naace – The Education Technology Association, a senior

manager at Elementary Technology and a school governor overseeing ICT; follow him at @mreddtech



CHANGING SPACES

When it comes to designing new buildings, once size shouldn't fit all, says **Talit Khan**

If you're about to embark on an extension to the school, or even modifying the existing building, creating a flexible space that promotes a sense of belonging should be near the top of your list, so keep these six key points firmly in mind.

ACCESS

Think in terms of accessible circulation routes that lead into open space areas that people with limited mobility can easily access. Footpaths leading to school entrances require thought – they should be broad and separated from the main access road; and consider placing toilets to reduce travel distances.

SPACE

The University of Cambridge Primary School is a fantastic example of 21st century building design. Open planned classrooms lead onto 'learning streets' where scheduled thematic topic work takes place.

The classrooms do not have doors, making them easier for children to access without having to fiddle around with door handles. This also means that, as one staff member stated (in a positive sense!), "There are no hiding places."

SENSORY AWARENESS

Good quality acoustics, appropriate glare-free controllable lighting, as well as visual contrast and texture that can be used for sensory wayfinding are essential upgrades.

Along with the reduction of stimuli that may lead to sensory overload for a child with autism, the use of elements such as colour, light, texture and therapeutic aroma

can provide comfort and a sense of safety to many children.

ADAPTABILITY

Allowing for flexibility and utilising spaces effectively is hugely important for supporting children with SEND.

Having access to different locations / spaces and being able to adjust the local surroundings (using movable partitions, variable lighting and acoustics) makes a positive difference. So too does minimising fixed furniture, opting instead for equipment that can be easily rearranged to suit changing needs.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

As cases of poor mental health rise within our schools, we need to be mindful of the impact the surroundings can have on our most vulnerable children. Providing safe areas for children to access, without causing harm to their dignity and self-worth, is critical.

SUSTAINABILITY

As well as being cost effective, any renovation or new project should encourage social cohesion for the school community, and so be accessible to all stakeholders. Finally, any negative impact on the environment should be minimised through efficient use of energy and resources.



Talit Khan is an independent SEND consultant.

Managing and maintaining school facilities can be extremely complex with many different elements and ongoing tasks to consider.

Educational facilities in particular have potential risks involved, especially when there is a lack of understanding, knowledge and strict processes in place.

From health and safety regulations to maintenance legislation, every element of facilities management needs to be taken seriously to ensure you are compliant and above all, keeping staff, students, and visitors safe.

There are several reasons why we need to pay particular attention to compliance and maintenance at this time. The pandemic is continuing to affect many areas of education, with elements such as effective ventilation becoming more important than they previously have been. Secondly, winter is still here and the temperature could yet drop in the coming weeks, which means facilities need to be prepared to withstand the poor weather conditions.

HIGH PRIORITY

WATER SAFETY

During any school holidays, large areas of educational facilities are intermittently left vacant and this is where bacteria can build up, as systems aren't being flushed through often enough. If left unmonitored and untreated, water systems are at risk of harbouring harmful bacteria such as Legionella. To remain compliant, water systems need to be checked regularly to ensure they're all working correctly.

FIRE SAFETY

There will already be fire safety procedures in place in the event of an emergency; however, the facility itself also needs to be checked. You must continue all testing and maintenance procedures to be certain that systems such as alarms remain fully functional. Fire doors and escape routes also need to be checked to ensure they remain operational and always kept clear. You need a process in place to check the fire extinguishers are in-date and undamaged. Setting a regular schedule of testing will see that they aren't missed.

GAS SAFETY

Gas systems pose one of the biggest risks to the facility and its occupants if it is not properly monitored and maintained. You must continue checks so that all gas systems are fully operational and in working order. This includes gas safety certificates which need to be maintained for boilers, and heating and kitchen equipment.

LOWER PRIORITY

EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Although it's not one of the highest priorities, emergency lighting is still essential, in case of



Are your school BUILDINGS COMPLIANT?

Keeping up with school buildings compliance is a year-round job, says **Lee Hatwell**

a mains supply failure. Key areas - such as emergency escape routes, stairwells and places where the floor levels change - must be well-lit. Maintain regular checks, monthly flick tests and your annual discharge test so that your system is fully maintained.

VENTILATION

The coronavirus pandemic has shifted priorities for facilities managers, as regulations are ever-changing. Ventilation, in particular, has become a bigger priority. To be compliant, ventilation systems must be working correctly and functioning accordingly. Ducts must be cleaned and all windows opened where required.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

Maintaining all electrical systems in line with current legislation is vital to meet the safety regulations. This is particularly important in schools as young children and adolescents are the main occupants, so you should consider where risks can be reduced. For example, using equipment with lower voltage and completing any essential remedial works prior to re-opening. Regular inspections are

critical to maintaining safe and effective systems.

DAY TO DAY COMPLIANCE

Day to day compliance tasks that must be carried out include regular cleaning, particularly during this time of Covid. Legislation is constantly evolving to incorporate the changing times and demands, on top of the regular checks and maintenance that are already required to and support can be extremely beneficial to making sure that you are operating within the law and guidelines.

Ultimately, the main goal of compliance is for safety, as well as making sure you are legally following the legislation. Adhering to the correct processes will help to streamline the workload and will keep the maintenance of your buildings manageable.



Lee Hatwell is a director at Mundy and Cramer

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MATs enjoy boost in finances

The annual Kreston report on school trusts has revealed financial surpluses and expansions

The recently-published 10th annual Kreston Academies Benchmark Report shows that the average in-year financial surplus for a multi-academy trust (MAT) doubled to more than £460k in 2021, up from £221k in 2020.

Overall, this equates to a 94% uplift per academy from 2020 to 2021 – representing the sector's highest ever surplus.

Cash balances have been bolstered through the injection of government funding earmarked for Covid testing, education catch-up programmes and other Covid-related costs which schools have not yet had the time or capacity to spend due to the pandemic.

The surpluses have also been strengthened by the cancellation of exams and the reduced costs associated with utilities, staffing and maintenance due to schools not being fully open during lockdown. These surpluses will be needed to fund the recovery effort.

However, the study shows primary academies have fared less well than secondary trusts or MATs, with average surpluses at just £14k in 2020/21. It is likely that this smaller surplus reflects the costs primary schools have incurred in managing the administrative burden of Covid-19 and being open to more pupils for a longer period of time during the pandemic.

Interesting figures from other areas of the report include:

STAFF COSTS

Staff costs as a percentage of total costs remained static for the 2021 academic year, with the average across all schools only moving up by 0.1% to just over 75%. Schools face difficulties in finding suitable staff with shortages likely to result in higher salaries, particularly for learning support staff and supply cover.

There was also the potential for an education skills drought as all schools rush to spend catch-up funds on a limited pool of highly skilled people needed to support pupils' mental health, academic and physical needs as the recovery programme ramps up, the report said.

THE GROWTH OF MATS

MATs have continued to grow in the last 12 months, with the average size of a trust increasing from 6.8 schools last year to 7.5 in



“Smaller surpluses in primary schools reflect the administrative burden of Covid-19 and being open to more pupils for a longer period of time during the pandemic”

2020/21. Nearly 65% of trusts reported expected growth in 2022/23 too, with 57% forecasting up to three additional schools joining their group.

Leora Cruddas CBE, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said: “The fact that MATs have expanded over the last 12 months of Covid disruption is testament to the huge amount of work and effort trusts and schools have put in to supporting this while juggling many other priorities.”

FINANCIAL FORECASTING

Sixty-one per cent of trusts predicted their reserves will be lower in three years' time and just 14% of trusts were confident they would remain the same.

Trusts with a maximum of 10 schools were much more likely to expect reserves to have

reduced by 2025 than those with 11 or more schools, reflecting the economies of scale achievable in a larger trust.

CENTRALISATION

Ninety-seven per cent of trusts are now partly or fully centralised, where tasks such as finance, HR, estates and school improvement are managed by the trust rather than its individual schools.

The study found that the benefits of centralisation are more apparent the larger the trust becomes, but investment is needed in the IT and team to deliver back office functions centrally.

Other notable statistics show:

- The number of trusts with in-year deficits (19%) has halved since 2019 and trusts showing a cumulative deficit position have dropped for the third consecutive year to just 3.8% in 2021 from 8.2% in 2019
- The percentage of academy trusts GAG pooling, where funds are collated from all schools in the group and distributed centrally according to need, has risen from 11% in 2020 to 14% in 2021, showing that they are in a small but growing minority.

Kreston is a global network of independent accounting firms with a presence in over 120 countries worldwide. To download the full Kreston Academies Benchmark Report visit: tinyurl.com/bishopfleming

Transforming your school grounds

Carley Sefton discusses the benefits of learning outside, and the funding on offer to help create perfect outdoor spaces

One of the key lessons from the last two years is that time outdoors is incredibly important. It improves our mental health and wellbeing, offers opportunities to get more active, and connects us to nature. It's especially important for children and young people. But what part can it play in their education?

The use of school grounds for curriculum-linked learning isn't anything new; Learning through Landscapes has been supporting teachers from across the UK to throw open their classroom doors and take learning outside for over 30 years. But with around 84% of the UK's population now living in urban areas – many of which have no accessible green space nearby – the school is an even more valuable tool for learning in and from nature.

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES

In November last year, the Department for Education announced plans to design a 'new model science curriculum' with climate education at its heart, to be put in place across England by 2023.

Children and young people will be expected to investigate their school grounds and enrich their biodiversity, and the school estate is likely to play a key role in education across all key stages and subjects. With this in mind, now is the perfect time to start exploring everything your school grounds have to offer.

But what if your school has a small, concrete playground with no equipment and no greenery? It's a concern I hear frequently from the teachers with whom we work, and it's completely understandable. There's a misconception that outdoor learning has to take place in sprawling forests or extensive grounds, but it's really not the case.

Even the smallest, most urban schools can have an outstanding outdoor learning

provision, because everything in the school grounds can, and should be used towards making an outdoor classroom – from using objects around the site to explore angles in maths, to hanging planters made from recycled water bottles to your walls.

YORKMEAD PRIMARY

Communication is just one of the skills that can be developed through outdoor learning, as teachers at Yorkmead primary discovered.

Located in a busy residential area on the outskirts of Birmingham, Yorkmead teaches over 450 pupils – over a third of whom are eligible for Pupil Premium. But last year, even though its school grounds are mostly covered in concrete and paving, English lead Andrew Neale-Crane decided he wanted more learning to take place outdoors.

Following pandemic lockdown restrictions, Andrew had seen first-hand that some of the nursery and reception children had developed issues with their wellbeing, were low in confidence, and showing signs of communication and separation issues. He hoped that more time outdoors would help them.

Yorkmead primary began investing in equipment, storage and furniture for their outdoor space and started developing their curriculum to include outdoor learning. However, when Andrew noticed not all the school's early years staff felt confident in using the school grounds for outdoor learning and play, he decided to apply for one of Learning through Landscapes' Local School Nature Grants.

Funded by players of the People's Postcode Lottery, our Local School Nature Grants scheme has helped over 2,400 schools across England, Scotland and Wales since 2017, giving them access to £500 of outdoor learning equipment as well as two hours of staff training with one of our experts. In October last year, one of our training and development officers visited Yorkmead Primary to help build the team's confidence



“One child, who had suffered with serious separation issues, now loves coming to school and engaging with peers”



in delivering lessons outdoors, to demonstrate best practice, and to show staff how outdoor learning could link to their existing curriculum.

"Our trainer Cindy gave us some great ideas, activities and tips to help with children's learning in the environment," Andrew told us afterwards. "The training actually inspired us to plan a whole week of environmental art activities, based around the work of Andy Goldsworthy, during which nursery and reception children had constant access to the outdoor area."

As well as the training, Yorkmead used the grant to get new outdoor planters, which the team has since used to transform a section of their outdoor space into an allotment area: a new resource for teaching children about the

science of the natural world.

"We've already seen a very positive impact on our reception children," Andrew said. "They've been engaging well with the outdoors across all areas of the curriculum, and we have noticed significant progress in their skills – particularly when it comes to communication and language, and their personal, social and emotional development."

"One child, who had suffered with serious separation issues, now loves coming to school and is engaging really positively with his peers and his learning."

"Our experience with Learning through Landscapes has been truly rewarding, and we hope that the children will continue to grow in confidence and overcome their

BIG SPACE FRACTIONS

Here is one example of how to create a learning space:

- Gather together chalk, string, a camera, some sheets or clothing, and split the class into teams of five or six children.
- Cut a measure of 1.5m of string for each team, tie a piece of chalk to the end, then ask each team to draw a three metre-diameter circle on the ground. Once the circles are accurately drawn, challenge the teams to create different fractions by laying the sheets or clothing over parts of the circle. What fraction of the circle is left uncovered? Start simply, then build to more challenging fractions and explore equivalent percentages and decimals to embed the concept.

communication issues through learning outdoors."

Yorkmead primary has made a huge amount of progress in a very short time, but your school may benefit from introducing outdoor learning activities into its curriculum on a more gradual basis.

APPLY FOR FUNDING

Learning through Landscapes' Local School Nature Grants scheme will re-open for applications at the end of March 2022, with £500 of outdoor learning equipment and free training on offer for 900 schools and early year settings across England, Scotland and Wales. You can find more details on our website (ltl.org.uk), where you'll also find over 150 free resources our outdoor learning in early years and primary. .

GET INSPIRED

Outdoor learning doesn't need to be grand: it can and should be adapted for any space, and even the smallest and simplest activities can have a big impact on the learning experiences of children at every stage of education.

So, I urge you - get outside, get inspired, and make the most of your school grounds for all its rich and diverse learning opportunities.



Carley Sefton is CEO of Learning through Landscapes

School libraries in a squeeze

Think you lack space for a school library?

You might be surprised, say

Alison Tarrant and **Daniel Fenwick**

The 2019 Great School Libraries campaign found that 1 in 8 schools don't have a school library, and the 2020 Softlink/School Library Association survey found that access to 60% of respondents' school libraries was restricted. The Primary School Library Commission from the National Literacy Trust further highlighted the impact that these restrictions had on children's access to books over the pandemic.

The body of research setting out the positive impacts of regular reading during childhood is clear, making the current situation troubling. But what makes a good school library and, given the restrictions, what can schools do?

SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING

A good school library supports personal, academic and reading development. The books within it are up-to-date and representative, acting both as a mirror and a window. There is a mix of fiction, information books, magazines, graphic novels and newspapers.

Books are not dusty or crammed onto shelves, but presented with care and visual appeal – like sweets in an old-style sweet shop, to borrow Cressida Cowell's analogy. Pupil voice is central, both actual, in book-related discussions, and metaphorically, in having a say about the layout of the space, the stock and the activities which are run.

Good libraries have someone running them who is the engine of the school's reading culture.

If you don't currently have a school library, don't be put off. Here are some ideas:

- Start small and grow. Anything is better than nothing, and once you start to see the impact you can create the understanding for more. Start with a few bookcases and go from there.

- Find space and be brutal. What is more important than embedding a love of reading? What about an outdoor space? Ideally somewhere central, but anywhere is a starting point.
- Apply to an organisation such as the Foyle Foundation for support, or ask local businesses if they can help.
- Appoint a librarian. Once someone has this role (and time for it) spaces will be found, books will start to multiply, and funding will be secured.
- Focus on the reading culture. Encourage children to want to seek out their library or bookshop. Ask your local School Library Service or the School Library Association for advice.

PLYWOOD AND FOAM

Take the case of St Wilfred's RC Primary. The school already had a relatively well-stocked library, but in a space that also served as an ICT suite and central corridor. It was just a transitory place to drop-off and collect books, not a destination where children could sit back and enjoy reading.

Books are an integral part of the school, supported by high quality reading and phonics teaching. However, after successive lockdowns, the school's reading data revealed some sobering truths.

It showed that the reading age of fluent, motivated readers barely changed during lockdown. Children who were less fluent readers, however, developed significant gaps, particularly those in younger classes where phonics lessons were missed. One of the school's priorities needed to be fostering a love of reading across the school.

If pupils picked up a book of their own accord, rather than being pestered by a teacher, then teachers found children were more likely to make progress, reducing the likelihood of future interventions.

A decision was taken to create a new area that would serve as cosy reading



“If pupils picked up a book of their own accord, rather than being pestered by a teacher, they were more likely to make progress”



space. The school's caretaker paneled out the edges of the ICT desk with plywood, adding safety foam to the staircase above to create a 'Reading Nook', which was filled with beanbags, warm lighting and an audiobook player. It was transformed from a neglected space into a tranquil haven which pupils looked forward to using.

Each class also has a scheduled time to use the library, making sure that they used it to relax and read in a calm and peaceful environment. Teachers use it to talk about different types of reading materials, and children share books they've enjoyed and make recommendations.

A lot of work has gone into the transformation and upkeep of St Wilfred's library, which is primarily down to the motivated HLTA and Library Coordinator, Mrs Blewitt, who trains pupil librarians, promotes specific books and removes old, outdated texts. The library works because everyone - from governors to

pupils - has engaged in the process, and staff have listened and acted on it.

There is no one, right way to start, but creating a school library is worth aiming for. Children growing up at the moment are more in need of access to reading without distraction, more in need of finding their passions rather than relying on social media, and more in need of learning to browse to find books and information, than ever before. These are skills which will set them on a positive path for life. However you do it, get advice, and do your school library your way.



Daniel Fenwick, Deputy Headteacher, St Wilfred's RC Primary School



Alison Tarrant, CEO, School Library Association and

CREATING LIFELONG READERS

Ten years ago, as the reading leader, I stumbled across this quote from Kyrene Beers: "If we teach a child the skill of reading without encouraging the love of reading, we will have created a literate illiterate."

This underpins everything about the teaching of reading in schools. We want our young to read, but we need to foster a love for reading for a child to succeed.

Two years ago, I reintroduced daily story-time - not crammed in at the end of the day, but a glorious, uninterrupted twenty minutes to read to the class. The rich language, which we often paused to explore, created images and visions for the children to discuss. For some, it was the first time they tackled an extended read, and were enthralled by the adventure within the pages.

The love of reading is in representation. It can do a child so much good to see or get to know a character that represents them. Recent publications by Elle McNicholl, Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott, Onjali Q Rauf and Helen Rutter embrace the representation of children and families in all their different forms, leading to children feeling seen and heard. Some found friends in the pages of books that were needed more recently than ever.

During the second school shutdown, we did doorstep drop-offs of books. One particular child, a very reluctant reader, had loved *The Goldfish Boy* by Lisa Thompson. I dropped off the sequel. The look on this child's face will remain with me forever; we had created a reader! This book was exactly what they needed, on that day.

Elle Firth, Deputy Headteacher, West Bretton Primary School

The School Library Association (SLA) is a UK focused charity which supports everyone involved in school libraries, and membership for a school is £95 a year. To learn more visit www.sla.org.uk, follow us on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/uksla](https://twitter.com/uksla)) or get in touch with info@sla.org.uk.

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plan, circular area, we decided that a SOLARDOME® Sanctuary would best support our group work and LPN activities.

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“ What feedback have you received?
We've had our dome for seven years now and still use it daily. It's large enough to cater for two classes at a



time and we've even fitted it out with benches and equipped it with a music and lighting system. It's better than we expected, and parents and staff are impressed with it. It really does have that wow factor and helps us stand out from other schools in the area.

“ What are the outstanding features?

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THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

Jason Stapley looks at why schools are increasingly turning to catering frameworks

The number of children in England receiving free school meals has climbed to more than 1.6 million – equating to nearly 21% of all students. Despite government funding available to support schools in offering meals, the increased demand highlights the importance to a growing number of students.

Considering the guidance and legislation in place, provision of school meals is kept to a standard that must be regularly governed. For schools that have a never-ending list of responsibilities resulting from their duty of care, the benefits offered by a framework agreement are becoming more apparent.

SIMPLIFYING THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

For the Red Kite Learning Trust, meeting the catering demands of 13 schools across North Yorkshire and Leeds is no small undertaking, and outsourcing support is a decision that must be well informed. It did so using the Food Broker Services Framework offered by Pagabo in early 2021.

Louise Bullman, the catering operations manager, explained how this came about. “We have always taken pride in providing a catering service across our academies that pupils and parents can rely on,” she said, “but doing this with the help of a framework has been an absolute game changer.

“During our first year using the framework we have experienced a 39% reduction in volume of invoices, which brings the total number down by 1160 and saves our purchasing team hours spent liaising with multiple suppliers. One hour per week saved in admin time is 513 hours annually across our teams and more than £5,000 in monetary terms.

“Each of our schools has access to a functional online shop where live product data and orders can be placed, resulting in one consolidated invoice prepared by e-foods before being sent to each site’s finance team for approval.

“Rolling out the new system was easy because training could be given at the same time and instances of absence mean tasks are not left incomplete.

“A fixed pricing structure means that menus can be costed with confidence and price changes come with forewarning.”



DELEGATING THE COMPLICATED BITS

Constantly monitoring spend to maintain compliance is a difficult and time-consuming task but all of the Pagabo framework agreements take on this responsibility for the user.

Our framework suppliers offer a digital platform to increase transparency. Everything from reporting to queries can be managed in one place and allow the user to control outcomes. We pay close attention to the market to help users achieve the best return on investment, while forecasting if further changes are likely to be needed.

New legislation can cause the need for rapid process adjustment. Providing a data link for nutritional data merge, the Food Broker Services Framework has enabled RKLt a smooth transition in consideration of Natasha’s Law, which was introduced in October 2021 to protect allergy sufferers.

RESPONDING TO UNPREDICTABLE CHANGES

Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic have rocked supply chains. And it’s here, says Louise, that the value of a framework has truly proven its worth: “Providing a meal service that worked alongside the year group bubble measures that were in place

in 2021 was a unique experience for schools across the nation and the main challenge came down to a balance between space and time.

“At our 13 schools, a hybrid approach combining ‘grab and go’ alongside separate communal dining meant that we could protect food options and presentation where possible.

“The extra insights we’re gaining from the framework also stand out as an improvement compared to our previous system. Regular live market updates have helped us plan more efficiently and e-foods has managed to absorb inflation much longer than we expected.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

With the political and social backdrop in which we find ourselves, there is growing evidence for collaboration involving experts able to increase visibility. Frameworks pledging to leave a long-lasting social impact, free of charge, may well be the vehicle for catering supplies you didn’t know you needed.



Jason Stapley is managing director at Pagabo

Returning to HEALTH and FITNESS

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, is taking advantage of government funding to get pupils' health and wellbeing back on track

When pupils from Holy Family Catholic Primary School returned to school last March after the second Covid lockdown, teachers noticed they seemed disengaged and preoccupied. Their academic learning had clearly taken a backward step, but their physical activity had also suffered and was low.

Drew Hill, the school's PE coordinator, said that school shutdown had been difficult for many children. There were few play areas or parks in Small Heath, the socially deprived urbanised area of Birmingham where the children lived, and the lack of PE lessons had adversely affected their health and fitness levels.

The school had provided PE activities via Twitter once a week during lockdown, and families had been encouraged to go outdoors, but it was not clear how many children participated. By the time they came back to school, teachers recalled it was evident that "some children hadn't run around for months".

Over the past six years Holy Cross has been one of the UK schools in receipt of the Government's PE and Sport Premium. In the first year, it received £8,000 and an additional £5 for each pupil in Years 1-6.

Since then, the terms of allocation have been reviewed by the Department for Education and schools with 17 or more pupils now receive £16,000 plus £10 per pupil, while those with 16 or fewer pupils receive £1,000 for each pupil. The funding is distributed via local authorities and must be used to "make additional and sustainable improvements to the provision of PE, physical activity and sports for the benefit of all primary-aged pupil to

encourage the development of health, active life-styles".

SECONDARY SCHOOL SUPPORT

Schools are required to publish the amount of premium received; a full breakdown of spending, what impact it has had on pupil sport participation and how the school plans to sustain improvement in the future. Schools may be asked to take part in a sampling review to check they are complying with the terms of the allocation.

Mr Hill said: "The money at Holy Family is largely used on CPD for the staff, as well as some equipment. We work closely with one of the city's secondary schools, Bishop Challoner Sports College, which delivers sessions for our teachers.

"They train our teachers in how to plan and deliver effective and engaging PE lessons, and generally feel more confident about doing so, and to use physical activity across the curriculum.

"There is one park locally, and it isn't necessarily a place you'd want children to play in"



"This is a small school in a very deprived area, and when they leave us every day many children go home and have nowhere to play. There is one park locally, and it isn't necessarily a place you'd want children to play in."

The school has also purchased equipment in the form of bocchia, badminton and mini golf sets to appeal to those who don't want to play more traditional playground games at breaktimes, like football.



SMART WAYS TO SPEND YOUR SPORTS PREMIUM

- Invite in the experts. Look out for local sports clubs, dance troupes, theatre groups and other organisations offering something “different” to engage and encourage pupils.
- Encourage staff to undergo training, or to take on responsibility for an after-school club. Ask pupils what sort of activities they would like to attend and ensure any new clubs are promoted and advertised to parents.
- Seek the help of neighbouring schools which have expertise in sport and PE to help train your own staff, and possibly to share equipment, pitches and other resources.
- Take another look at your weekly timetable. Is there scope to include a 15-20- minutes pulse-raising activity? Sometimes breaking down physical activity into smaller chunks can be more engaging for pupils than a longer PE lesson. It will also give them a breather from the classroom, so they return to lessons refreshed and focused.

“We also have a play leaders’ scheme, starting in Year 4, where pupils are trained to encourage sport and games, and is an opportunity to give some children the chance to be leaders in their year. Again, the children are trained by our colleagues at Bishop Challoner to host and deliver games and activities to children of all ages in the school.

“We use the play leaders’ scheme to boost engagement in playing during break and lunchtimes, and we believe this has increased the levels of activity the children are exposed to.

“Since the pandemic, it’s been really important to promote PE and physical activity and it’s now one of the main subjects being taught in the school.”

EVERY DAY IS PE DAY

Holy Family has also signed up for the Youth Sport Trust’s Active Recovery Curriculum, which focuses on “restoring socialisation and readiness for learning with a reduced curriculum and increased PE focus”.

In addition to encouraging playground games, PE has been incorporated into every school day to maximise opportunities for physical activity and movement. Staff at Holy Family have devised a timetable to

allow one class at a time to use the playground to run the “daily mile”.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 use a paid-subscription service called Jump Start Jonny, even morning, while pupils in Key Stage 2 have 15-minute “after-break” sessions which involve playing fast-paced games to get their heart rates up.

There have also been non-curriculum events such as sessions delivered by Warwickshire cricket club and weekly visits from a theatre company teaching alternative skills such as wilderness activities and tug of war.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

During the spring and summer months the school prioritised outdoor teaching and learning, including subjects such as maths, and has extended its extracurricular provision to include more than 10 clubs every week based around games and activity. The school estimates that 70% of pupils attend at least one of these sessions, with many children participating in two or three.

In recent months, teachers have reported a noticeable reduction in children’s weight and improvement in their fitness levels and

stamina. They have also become more attuned to the need to stay fit and healthy as well as being outdoors in the fresh air.

The range of sporting opportunities on offer by Holy Family has translated into enthusiasm and increased motivation for many pupils.

“All the children are buzzing, all the children want to be getting involved,” Mr Hill added. When pupils were surveyed following visits from external cricket and tennis providers, most of them cited these sports as their favourites.

There has also been increased interest in competition. Mr Hill said that during recreational play at breaktimes “you can see the competitiveness shining through” and “winning means a lot to them”.

The increased peer-to-peer social interaction resulting from increased sports activities and the effects of lockdown led one teacher to note that “you could really see how much they value that and how much we all took it for granted and how much they had missed it”. Many pupils have now increased in confidence after reporting feeling ‘shy’ and ‘nervous’ when they first returned. They also recognised the value of friendships and spending time with peers and were “excited” to be outside and playing with friends.

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT AIR PURIFIER

Clean, fresh air in classrooms is more important than ever, says **Edward Ballsdon**

Clean air has never been more important, whether delivered via ventilation or air purification. But with so many products on the market, how does your educational establishment choose the right one for your needs?

As the world emerges from lockdown and there is more gathering indoors, the threat of airborne transmission escalates. There is evidence to suggest that, after a protracted period of social distancing and mask wearing, people have weaker immune systems to defend themselves against the onslaught of respiratory viruses such as flu and the common cold, as well as Covid-19 and its variants.

Schools are rightly concerned about protecting their students and teachers. As a by-product of that protection, they also want to reduce absenteeism and boost learning.

Many buildings struggle to achieve the World Health Organization's recommended air change rate of 10 litres per second per person. Opening windows is not viable in winter. That's where air purification comes in, either working in isolation (single or multiple units) or to supplement an in-built Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING AN AIR PURIFIER

1 TECHNOLOGY
It's critical to choose the right technology for the job. In its Covid-19 air cleaning guidance, the UK SAGE committee's environmental and modelling group recommends High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration systems to capture COVID-19 particles, with germicidal ultraviolet light (UVC) as a supplemental treatment to inactivate the virus. HEPA is even proven by NASA to trap a minimum of 99.97% of fine particulate matter.

2 STRONG AIRFLOW
Portable air purifiers must be heavy duty, with a powered fan system. This creates high static air pressure, which is necessary to allow sufficient air to flow through the HEPA filter and to boost air cleaning performance



throughout an entire space, rather than just the air around the purifier machine itself. Residential air purifiers using HEPA will not serve as a substitute for a hospital grade device containing a powerful fan.

3 HARMFUL SIDE EFFECTS
These are associated with the kind of air purifiers sometimes referred to as using 'additive' technologies (based on indirect chemical reaction) as opposed to 'subtractive' (filtering and direct inactivation). Avoid UVA/UVB, ionisation, plasma, electrostatic precipitation and oxidation methods. These have limited evidence of efficacy against the virus and/or significant concerns over toxicological risks during application. This guidance comes from the SAGE committee.

4 REPUTATION
Be aware that the big brands generally make small devices for residential use only, not fit for purpose in a school environment. Marketing claims can be exaggerated and unsubstantiated. The key is to look for independent scientific testing carried out in real life environments from respected laboratories and institutions to validate any claims. Look for case studies in other schools and contact a couple of quoted customers to obtain a first hand account of their experience. Check the manufacturer's sustainability credentials, especially the potential to recycle both the product itself and the consumables.

5 COST
When it comes to capital cost, compare like with like. You get what you pay for. Compare the cost against that of installing a new integrated HVAC system. Also think about ongoing costs. Air purification units consume the equivalent of a fridge freezer and cost just a few pence a day to run. Further substantial savings can be made on energy (and associated carbon emissions) from not having to heat fresh air intake. With energy cost currently very high, the ongoing savings can quickly offset the initial capital cost of the air purifiers.

SAGE encourages buyers of air purifiers to exercise caution and do their homework.

For a relatively small investment, and low ongoing costs, your school can achieve a high standard of indoor air quality. Portable, hospital-grade air purifiers also offer flexibility, as they can easily be moved around to heavily occupied rooms or to areas where enhanced aerosol generation is likely, e.g. singing, projected speech or aerobic activity.

Choosing wisely can serve as a twenty-four seven bodyguard to protect and enhance the lives of students and teachers.



Edward Ballsdon, co-founder and managing director, Rensair.



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NEED TO KNOW - Q&A

“We believe it will become the norm”

Tony Foote, director of ClearFog Ltd, explains the benefits of cleaning with hypochlorous acid fogging



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Clearfog provides hypochlorous acid and fogging machines to schools, colleges, day centres and businesses as a potent yet totally natural weapon in the fight against Covid-19 and viruses generally. This combination not only sanitises, it protects cleaning staff and significantly reduces cleaning time.

What is hypochlorous acid?

Hypochlorous acid may sound a little ominous. It is produced in our white blood cells to fight infection and promote healing.

We recreate it by electrolysing a light saline solution. It is benign to humans, a non-irritant to eyes, lungs and skin yet it's lethal to coronavirus. It is in use across the world but in the UK we are only recently realising its potency in the fight against Covid-19.

How effective is fogging?

One of the battles in the fight against Covid-19 is time – cleaning of toilets etc is currently a continuous cycle in schools. By using a fogging machine, you can safely sanitise a six-cubicle toilet inside of two minutes at far less risk to cleaning staff.

The fogging device is very powerful and creates a rolling fog which settles on all surfaces, under desks, chairs and toilet seats sanitising areas that are sometimes missed.

Sounds expensive?

At £500 per fogger, it can seem expensive at first glance. All but one school that has purchased a fogger have bought a second machine within two weeks. That's how long it takes to realise the time-savings fogging creates compared to traditional methods. All of our school clients recognise fogging with hypochlorous acid as the leading element in their fight



against Covid-19. The liquid itself costs £9.95 for five litres, which gives 90 minutes of fogging. As our clients realise – that's a lot of fogging.

Apart from Covid-19 what else can foggers battle ?

Hypochlorous acid is also lethal to e-coli, norovirus and 99.9999 per cent of viruses. I think it's fair to say that all of our clients are looking to continue fogging post Covid-19, as part of their



TONY FOOTE:
Director of
ClearFog
Limited



Contact:

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sales@clearfog.co.uk
<https://clearfog.co.uk>

cleaning regime. There seems to be an understanding that we will have pockets of variants for many years to come.

Hypochlorous acid can and should be a potent weapon going forward.

What else can hypochlorous acid be used for?

It was used as far back as the first world war to clean wounds. It is used in ophthalmic surgery, to clean implants, and is widely used in dentistry, where the danger of airborne particulates has been acknowledged for years. It is also used as a mouth rinse.

It is used globally to clean soft fruits and vegetables and to prolong the life of cut flowers. Nature has given us a powerful tool to fight covid with and we believe it will become the norm.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

- Fogging with hypochlorous acid sanitises a six cubicle toilet in under two minutes
- Most of our customers see a return on investment within two weeks
- In these uncertain times, fogging is creating confidence in staff and service users.

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WHAT'S MARCUS RASHFORD DOING TODAY?

Social media presents an opportunity, not a problem, in primary schools says **Gary Spracklen**

Social media in schools. Where do we start? It's not a simple debate and, indeed, even what we define as social media is no longer very clear.

Social media is the collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. It's no surprise that children love it when it facilitates interaction with friends and families.

However, as with so many other areas of technology, the key is not which social media children use but what they do with it, that is important.

One could argue that primary schools should leave this challenge to secondary schools because most social media platforms have a joining age threshold of 13+. But that would be an abdication of responsibility because we know that children access these websites much earlier.

Put it this way – if we were seeking to develop water safety we wouldn't keep children away from water until they are 16 and then throw them off the pier. Treating Instagram or TikTok as a problem means we will miss an opportunity to teach, to discuss and to lead.

BEING RESPONSIBLE

As with TV viewing, social media is something that children should first experience together with a responsible adult (parents / carer / teacher). It is not a babysitter to keep children occupied.

The adverse effects of passive screen watching experiences on the cognitive development of children aged under three years are well known. This particularly applies to children passively viewing alone. The old BBC title of "Watch with Mother" had it right – parents (or teachers) should sit with them, chat about what is being watched, point out things they might have missed and be active viewers, together.

WHAT'S GRETA UP TO?

Developing a "sense of other" in children promotes empathy and tolerance and is rewarded with positives such as less bullying and better social integration. The ability to use social media to reflect on

others ("I wonder what Greta Thunberg / Marcus Rashford is doing today?") can be significant and helpful.

DON'T LOCK AND BLOCK

Back in 2012, the CloudLearn (cloudlearn.net) research project provided an insight into what could be done if school's went against the tide of 'locking and blocking' down of IT systems.

The aim of the project was to source, collate, reflect on and publish proven effective practice from experienced classroom teachers and practitioners – building on what worked for them, in their cultural and educational context, and to offer a portfolio of general and proven approaches.



The report included some excellent recommendations for teachers, which still hold true today, including:

- Challenge students to research and use the social and portable media to explore, ask and answer questions.
- Get pupils to think about how and why they are using social media. If they are simply using it to access information, how is it different to a school textbook?
- Plan the lesson as meticulously as you would any other. The subject matter warrants your attention.
- Sanction inappropriate use or comments as you would off-task or spurious comments in the classroom in any other guise. Laughing in the lesson at bullying or inappropriate comments seen on social media is not really any different to doing so in real-life.

“Social media
is not a
babysitter to
keep children
occupied”

FADS AND TRENDS

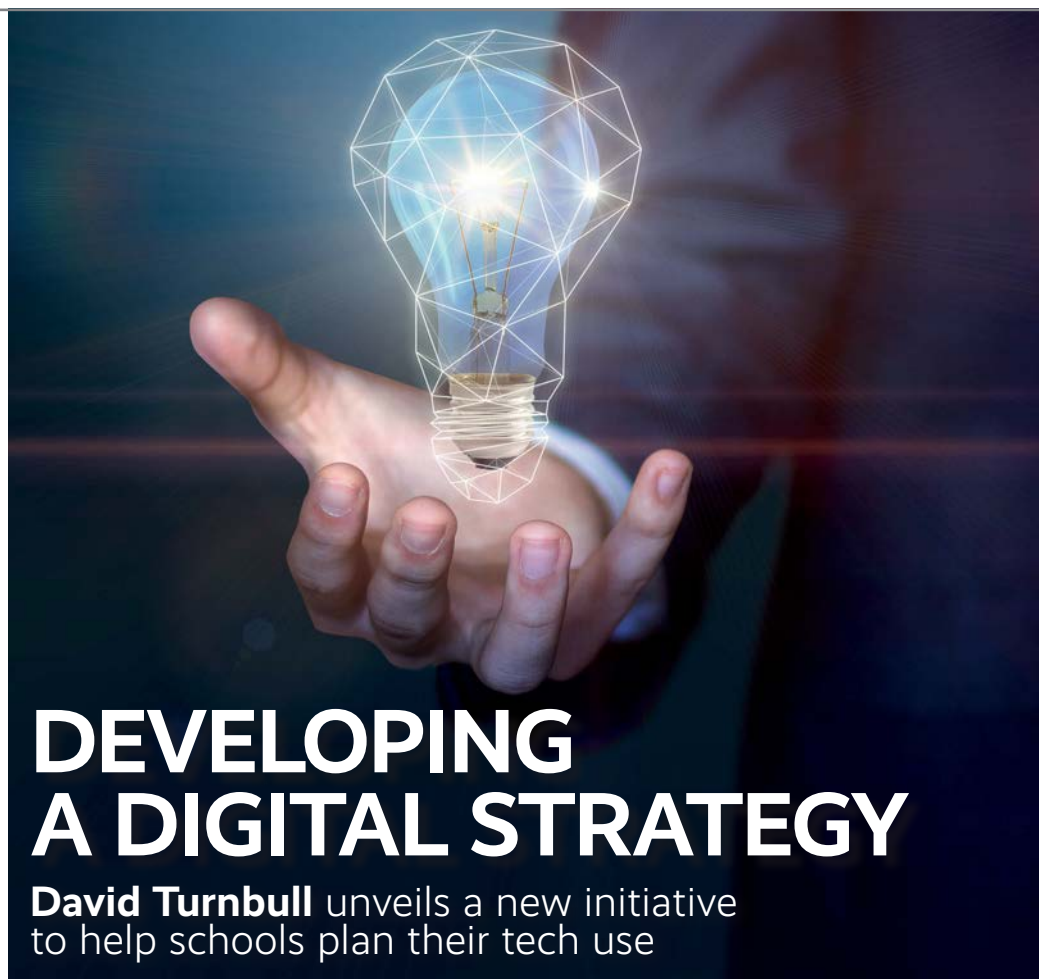
Social media platforms come and go and dip and dive in popularity, and if young people see a vacant space in their lives they will fill it. Our job is not to pretend that social media doesn't exist, but to try to use it for good: to teach children to be discerning and responsible, to discover the educational value, and to work with them on effective strategies to protect and keep them safe.

If young people see social media used in a positive way to enhance learning, it changes the way they perceive these spaces. And who wouldn't want that?



Gary Spracklen is headteacher at The Prince of Wales School, Dorchester.

He is a former Digital Educator of the Year and a member of ETAG (the Educational Technology Action Group).



DEVELOPING A DIGITAL STRATEGY

David Turnbull unveils a new initiative to help schools plan their tech use

The pandemic forced primary schools into an online learning environment with little warning, with teachers and leaders scrambling at speed to adopt suitable technological tools for teaching and learning.

Whilst many found pockets of good practice in the chaos, much of this has fallen by the wayside in the desire to “return to normal”. Schools have gone back to in-person teaching with access to more technology than ever before but, for many, coherent strategies around how and when and why those tools should be used remain elusive.

A May 2021 Department of Education EdTech survey found that a considerable proportion of schools do not have a digital strategy. Schools are excellent at defining priorities and setting goals for teaching and learning but need support with creating a digital strategy that supports this school vision.

A new collaboration between the UK's Educate Ventures Research and the US's International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is designed to help bridge this gap. Make the Future is a community event specifically aimed at helping teams of leaders create thoughtful, coherent digital strategies that make sense for their schools.

Make the Future will kick off with an in-person, retreat-style summit for 50 school teams, each with three members. Schools will come from across the sector - state and independent, primary and secondary, mainstream and special, and will dive deep into their own digital strategies through workshops and keynote speakers focusing on three topics:

- Today - how can we harness positive developments that emerged during the pandemic to strengthen and advance our digital strategy?
- Tomorrow - what are the next steps in your strategy and how can we remove barriers to progress?
- The future - what does it mean to be AI ready and how do we do it?

They will also get the opportunity to consider technological solutions to their current school priorities by going hands-on with innovative tech solutions.

One of our participants is Rachel Tomlinson, headteacher at Barrowford Primary school. She said: “Heads are overwhelmed with tech companies trying to sell us things. What we need most is advice and help on how to create and implement a digital strategy in our schools; how to discern good solutions from bad; and in some cases, just get a basic understanding of what's out there and what works.”

After the summit, Education Ventures Research and ISTE will curate an ongoing programme of content to provide continuing support and activities.

Schools are all at different stages in their digital journey. We know that a grounding in understanding data and evidence will serve them well, and that building a community of professionals who can turn to each other for support is essential.

David Turnbull, teacher-in-residence at Educate Ventures Research. Make the Future (makethefuturesummit) will be held on 28-30 March 2022 at Sevenoaks School.

Using tech for independent learning

Devices give pupils a choice and a voice in how they learn, says **Cheryl Shirley**

Assistive technology has, fundamentally, been designed to help people with specific needs in some way. Over the last few decades, society has recognised its benefits and it has become highly regarded as a tool for use in SEND learning within schools. But, as months of COVID-enforced remote learning and home-schooling have shown, there's significant potential for the technology to help with literacy, speech, and writing.

The ideal solution

There's no one-size-fits-all approach for learning. Every classroom contains a wide and varied mix of students. Recognising and understanding this diversity, teachers need to begin focusing on true inclusion by designing and planning their lessons around a model that can reach every learner. But differentiated learning is hard enough in the day-to-day busy-ness of a classroom, especially with such a diverse mix of educational needs. Perhaps it's time, then, to take a different approach.

The ideal solution would be to provide students with choice and a voice, giving them flexibility around what they learn, and when and how they learn it; allowing them to choose the tools that would both build on their strengths and support them with their challenges. Companies like Texthelp make these tools available to educators, creating bespoke learning opportunities for all through firm goals and flexible means.

Thinking differently

The idea of introducing technology at The LEO Academy Trust began more than four years ago. We wanted to think differently and shift our mindset away from a didactic approach towards a more transformative one. We considered what it would be like if every child had a device and about how, by using a wide variety of tools, we could make our teaching and learning more engaging. Creating a situation where children are engaged and passionate about learning allows them to become more creative and independent.

Inspired by this, we decided to try a one-to-one programme in Year 4 classes across all of our schools, and were thrilled to find that it worked. We saw children engaging with tasks in which they would never normally be interested and found

that embedding these tools at primary was fundamental to successfully incorporating them into the curriculum at secondary and beyond. Effectively, we'd given them all a new way to access the curriculum, as well as giving our teachers a resource they could use to develop and supplement their classroom practices.

Overcoming challenges

Perhaps the greatest challenge was overcoming many teachers' lack of confidence in using technology. When approaching new technology, teachers will often be unsure of how to use it or what to do with it.

Initial training is required to help educators understand how different tools and platforms work, coaching them to fully appreciate how technology can assist them with some of their day-to-day problems. It's important to ensure the staff have the cross-curricular tools they need to teach in the most effective way. A strategic approach is necessary.

As well as being a challenge around implementation, confidence can be an important factor in measuring the effectiveness of the technology we use in the classroom. As with any other tool we'd use,

we consider whether children have become more confident through being more independent. Many children lack confidence and are regularly asking for help. But with the technology embedded in our schools, you can now see children finding their own ways of solving problems, using the tools they have available.

Children are digital natives and it is second nature to them to work this way. Unlike some teachers, children don't see a new tool as something to be frightened of, but as something exciting to explore. But it's the job of their teacher to steer them in the right direction, and to ensure they're able to use that tool effectively, to help them learn even more.

Independence and ownership

Since we introduced one-to-one devices across our Y4 classes, we're aware that the children are now considerably more independent and have taken ownership of their learning. There's also much more flexibility around access to learning. Children who can't finish their work in time at school will take their device home and finish it in the evening. It's more of a blended and efficient approach.

"We saw children engaging with tasks in which they would never normally be interested"



Cheryl Shirley is director of computing and digital skills at the LEO Academy Trust.



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Screen or script?

A hybrid approach can help to drive literacy improvement, says **Aimee Cave**

Anthing which helps teachers work more efficiently is vital – and with reading, that means speeding up the process of assessments.

Regular assessment of children's progress is essential to help teachers, SENDCos, and senior leaders to understand what support is needed to meet reading milestones. But marking and scoring paper tests is very time-consuming.

In our school, as in many others, this is a major challenge as we try to maximise the support we can give the children by putting interventions in place. This is more critical now as Covid has meant more children have gaps in their learning.

So, when we got back into the classroom in September, the first thing we did was to test to identify what interventions were needed.

SCREENS – PROBLEM OR SOLUTION?

Screens and technology are sometimes cited as the reason why children have fallen out of the habit of reading. But when used in the right way, they can also help us to develop young readers.

We know early identification of literacy issues, and swift intervention, is by far the most effective way of boosting reading skills and children's life chances, so most educators are now open to developments in assessment.

Testing children's reading skills, ability and comprehension isn't easy: there are so many different cognitive and linguistic processes in action. Each time a child reads, what they already know – or do not know – is reinforced. Reading aloud means words are transformed

into speech and gain meaning by being matched to the child's vocabulary and language knowledge.

Paper-based tests have many strengths, but they can't always tell us the whole story. Phonics tests, for instance, check whether children can sound out syllables and words – but not whether they can understand or infer the meaning of what they read.

MEANINGLESS PERCENTILES

Assessments which focus on comprehension don't give detail on *how* a child is reading. Children with the same score – on paper – can have very different needs in practice. For example, does the child know the meaning of *every* word they've just read? Are their eyes struggling with where to go on the page?

That's why I believe using technology to assist with assessment has a lot to offer.

For example, my school has used an onscreen assessment for two years, and it's

“Paper-based tests have many strengths, but they can't always tell us the whole story”

transformed our routine reading assessments.

Artificial intelligence and the eye-tracking technology in the Lexplore Analytics assessment we use measures when, where, and how children's eyes move as they read, giving us an analysis of their skills, attainment and possible problems seconds later.

If children can't decode words and can't read, they can't do anything else. That's different from comprehension, which the paper assessments can examine.

Workload is always a challenge and I also like that the technology takes care of the scoring process. We have cut the assessment and scoring time taken from about two days for a class to about half a day, freeing up teachers to support reading.

We do this every term, sometimes following up with more specific paper tests, so we have a better understanding of our pupils' needs.

IMPROVING ASSESSMENT

We can have the best of both worlds. Paper-based assessments will remain because children need to be familiar with the SATs format and some aspects of reading are better assessed this way.

But we can enjoy a mixed economy of technology for on-screen assessment supported by paper format to give us the best-possible information on our children. This hybrid system will get them used to taking paper tests and free up hours of teacher time to support struggling readers.



Aimee Cave is SENDCo and assistant head at Pocklington Junior School, York. To read Lexplore Analytics' recent report comparing paper and hybrid models of reading assessment, visit bit.ly/LexplorePaperVsTech

GIVING AWAY OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

We need to talk to pupils about consent and protecting their data, says **Karine George**

The need to socially distance following the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the digitisation of everything we know in our lives, from healthcare to the way we socialise.

Heads and teachers have been remarkable at embracing new technologies to keep learning going for the benefit of the children.

The use of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) has become prevalent in our schools and opened new worlds of possibilities for learners. The benefits of those technologies range from the use of smart analytics to identify areas where children struggle, to making us more efficient with our lesson planning. Daily administrative tasks have been simplified, and new and exciting opportunities have emerged for interacting with students who have learning disabilities.

But as our appetite for new technologies has grown – partly out of necessity – there has been limited time to identify the risks they may pose. Any previous concerns about the dangers of AI-powered systems were swept away as their adoption became the norm in assessing and tailoring lessons for individual students.

SAFEGUARDING PRIVACY

The spotlight on privacy controls only came into play as new issues previously unheard-of heightened concerns. Zoom bombing (cyber-harassment in which uninvited individuals interrupt meetings over Zoom) for example, became a worrying trend despite the claims that the video-conferencing platform had end-to-end encryption.

For schools, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of 2018 meant that they had greater accountability for the data they collected, especially where this information was handled by a third party. This, too, raised anxiety levels as worried school leaders were left to deal with the repercussions.

During the pandemic, we spent more and more time online in order to survive, both at home and at school. We shopped, worked, took care of our health needs and our social life remotely. The more we did so the more information about ourselves we revealed, without fully understanding the potential repercussions.

ALGORITHMS GONE AWRY

The A level fiasco of 2020 shone a light on hidden risks that many teachers had not previously considered.

Transparency and accountability measures were called into question and the public's trust in AI was eroded. Students protested at the results churned out by an algorithm that proved to be biased towards particular cohorts, with young people attending schools in disadvantaged areas identified as among those worst affected.

What followed was difficulty in explaining who was accountable for the errant coding, how this had happened, and why.

Technologies like AI are neither good nor bad; what is important is how we use them. We need to heighten our awareness of both the benefits and the threats.

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

Children born today and those currently in our schools have arrived in a digital world from which they cannot opt out. Their exposure to AI will be greater than any generation before them. So, if our moral imperative is around making a difference to the life chances of young people to ensure they are prepared for life, work and the world in general, then we need to develop our own understanding and find the sweet spot between panic and complacency.

To do this we need to give young people a voice in conversations centred around data, AI and ethics so they can make more informed decisions about their futures.

UNDERSTANDING AI

Do your pupils currently understand what AI is? Do they understand how data about their academic progress, attendance, medical conditions and learning challenges is being collected and used? Do they know who has access to this information?

We usually seek consent from parents to obtain their children's personal details, but it is the young people who will pay the price if we, as educators and parents, get it wrong.

To create good citizens in the future – citizens who understand the risks of the technological world in which they reside – we

need to ensure we get consent from the children, as well as their parents, when collecting pupil data, and to talk to them about what that consent means.

They need to have a voice. Currently we do not give them any opportunity to discuss this, nor do we broach it with them in a way they might understand. We must, therefore, develop a language that will help them to grasp what data is, why it is collected and what happens to it. And that they have some control over that process, because technology increasingly forms part of the armoury for teaching and learning.

USING ROLE PLAY AND GAMES

These discussions can begin at a very young age, through conversations, games and role play. Allowing young children to act out certain situations through role play can help them to make sense of real-life events collaboratively, particularly when it comes to complex notions such as lending and sharing.

One way to approach this, is to ask pupils to bring in something that may be important to them, such as a favourite possession. This will be used to represent data. Now ask the children how it would feel to lend this possession to a friend.

Discuss how the child feels about this favourite item and the reasons they might give for allowing someone to play with or borrow their possession, and what reasons they might give for not allowing it. For example:

- He/she always asks
- He/she broke it and wouldn't give it back
- He/she didn't ask me, they just took it

In this way, children begin to understand the parameters of lending and borrowing someone else's personal things. We can talk about our rights as the owner of the toy (data)

and the responsibility of the person who borrows it. For example:

- It's our right to be asked if someone wants to borrow our possessions
- It's our friend's responsibility to prove that you gave it freely
- It's also up to them to look after it and to tell you how long they would keep hold of it

The role-play conversation can be built upon further by allowing the borrower to give the toy to another friend. What rights should the owner now expect and what responsibility does the borrower have in this situation?

If the borrower doesn't look after the item properly, to whom would you turn for help and what questions would you ask?

In this way, we can start building up the ideas about the importance of protecting our personal belongings, and this includes our data.



Karine George is a former primary headteacher and co-founder of Leadership Lemonade.

IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, INTELLIGENT?

- **AI seems to be everywhere, but its definition is less clear. It is often thought of as futuristic and the science-fiction industry hasn't helped dispel this perception.**
- **Challenging our students to develop their critical thinking is an essential, and James Nottingham's Learning Pit provides a framework with which to think deeply about questions like the ones posed here. It encourages children to be more comfortable with metacognition and helps them to reflect and develop their questioning skills, which in turn moves their knowledge from surface to deeper learning.**



USING EDTECH TO REIMAGINE LITERACY

Christopher Perrott outlines how technology can improve engagement in reading

It is difficult for most of us to imagine life without being able to read and write. Yet this is a reality for an estimated seven million adults in England, who have limited literacy skills.

According to the Literacy Trust, this includes having difficulty understanding unfamiliar pieces of text and extracting information; challenges which impact upon people's ability to complete day-to-day tasks, obtain jobs and more.

As an English teacher, supporting all children to develop lifelong literacy skills is close to my heart. Children who enjoy reading are three times more likely to have good mental wellbeing, as well as having a richer understanding of different cultures and the world around them, and higher aspirations more broadly.

LITERACY AND COVID-19

At LEO Academy Trust, our English provision is centred around exciting, engaging lessons which equip children with both the necessary skills and a genuine passion for reading. The pandemic compelled many of us to review our teaching and learning strategies and consider what methods are most effective for engaging pupils.

As part of this assessment, literacy experts from across the Trust came together to review our English teaching, with a specific focus on reading and comprehension for KS2 pupils. Digital tools had already been proving incredibly effective in other curriculum areas, such as maths, so we asked the question: why not incorporate this into our English lessons?

COLLABORATION

Working in partnership with London Grid for Learning (LGfL) and ReadingZone Live, we sought to develop an online resource that would give children deeper insights into the books they were reading. In addition, we wanted to help save teachers time and focus on the specific literacy content domains for each year group.

Over the subsequent months, we worked with the LGfL and ReadingZone Live teams to re-develop the ReadingZone Live online platform, transforming the site into an innovative and interactive reading resource for

both whole class teaching and small group interventions.

BRINGING STORIES TO LIFE

Within the platform there are over 50 author interviews, text-specific extracts and videos, with each writer sharing carefully curated insights into their books. With genres spanning historical fiction, to drama and adventure, the LEO literacy experts developed tailored questions and tasks based on each author's texts, to fit specifically into each of the KS2 content domains.

This specialised content has allowed children to delve deeper into each of the books and discover the processes of bringing a story to life. It includes technical advice on how to transform their writing and enhance their understanding of characterisation, motive and context.

Taking one lesson as an example, while exploring extracts from Michael Morpurgo's *The Wreck of Zanzibar* and Jamia Wilson's *Young, Gifted and Black*, our Year 6 pupils have enjoyed watching the accompanying videos and learning more about the characters and their inspiration, from the perspective of the author. The videos really captured the children's imaginations and helped to bring the stories to life.

TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

By weaving these videos into the wider context of their reading and writing lessons, children have been better able to transfer knowledge into answering questions, especially those looking at inferring characters' actions and atmosphere.

Combining the videos with the tailored questions has been an effective way to further develop pupils' learning. The questions are carefully mapped to each book extract and cover a range of skills to ensure children have multiple opportunities to practice and consolidate their learning. Children have also loved the extension activities, such as writing and continuing the story from where the author finished.

TAILORING EXTRACTS TO LEARNING LEVELS

One of the key benefits of the resource is being able to use it as part of targeted literacy intervention for our less confident learners.

Teachers can select specific texts and questions which are matched to pupils' abilities, meaning that we can support children of all levels in one classroom.

This strategy is important for building confidence in less able readers as it gives children the freedom to focus on one specific skill at a time and develop their understanding. As a result, we have seen a tangible difference in their ability to answer questions with greater pace and accuracy.

CONTINUING LITERACY DURING DISRUPTION

The resource has become even more invaluable during snap lockdowns and classroom bubble teaching. Having the recordings of each of the texts and extracts from the ReadingZone Live platform within our online English lessons meant that children could continue to access the content at any time. Additionally, children had the opportunity to practise reading aloud by recording themselves, allowing their teachers to hear them develop their fluency and make explicit comments on where to improve and correct any misconceptions regarding pronunciation. This was critical to ensure no loss of learning.

Deploying a hybrid approach of live and recorded teaching meant that pupils could still be exposed to explicit modelling of comprehension-based questions, before getting the chance to practise collaboratively on web-based applications such as Jamboard, Nearpod and Google Forms. Throughout online reading sessions, we used 'Breakout Rooms' within the Google Classroom platform to give children the opportunity to discuss with their peers, just as they would in the classroom. Such an approach shifted the ownership of learning to the pupil,



BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

This new resource has also been a brilliant way to reduce teachers' time spent on lesson planning and boost confidence in delivering reading and writing lessons. For example, one of our newly qualified teachers in Year 3 found the pre-written questions in the resource especially useful, as over time they were able to take these and adapt them to suit the context of other texts they were using within the classroom. By referring back to the model provided by the LEO literacy experts, teachers can feel reassured that what they are teaching and exposing children to is correct.

empowering them fully to develop a higher level of independence whilst the teacher continued to facilitate, rather than explicitly direct the learning.

Back in the real classroom, the tool has continued to be extremely beneficial for pupils' engagement. The resource gives all pupils, not only those with additional needs, the chance to listen to a text in advance, pre-exposing them to key concepts, vocabulary and awareness of questions ahead of lessons. This can help to remove, or at least reduce, particular barriers to learning they may previously have faced, helping to create a more equitable learning experience.

EMPOWERING THROUGH READING

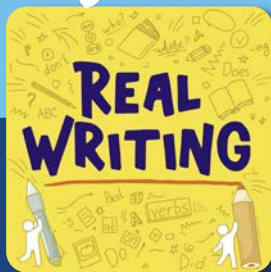
Reading and writing are not only essential skills that children need to succeed in life; a great story can have the power to transport a child to a place of real joy, excitement and pleasure – a feeling which will stay with them into adulthood. By starting children off on the right foot with literacy in primary schools, we can help them grow into confident and skilled readers, writers and thinkers.



Christopher Perrott is director of English for LEO Academy Trust, Sutton, and vice principal of Cheam Common Junior Academy.



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WHY I LOVE...

Chris Edwards, headteacher at Reedham Primary, explains how an online tutor is improving maths skills and confidence across the school

ABOUT US:

Reedham Primary is a small primary school in Norfolk, teaching children in three mixed-age classes.

TALKING ABOUT:

Online maths tutor, Maths-Whizz



“ Why did you introduce Maths-Whizz? ”

With only 77 pupils, we are the smallest stand-alone primary school in Norfolk. We offer a nurturing and supportive environment, but we also always aim to find new ways to improve results. Five or six years ago, we were looking to support our less able students in maths, and our educational psychologist for Norfolk suggested a virtual tutor could be helpful.

“ How easy has it been to implement? ”

Any edtech is a big investment, especially for a small school like ours. Teaching staff all need to be trained and brought on board to use it wholeheartedly, regularly monitoring usage and progress. This takes a little time to become a habit, but once systems are in place, it becomes light touch and has many advantages. For example, if homework is set so children make four progressions in a week, it takes seconds to check on screen that this has been completed. There is no marking for teachers, and it also provides ongoing formative assessment for the staff without it taking up any of their time.

“ How is it used? ”

We encourage our children to access Maths-Whizz at home to achieve progress, so getting parental engagement has been key. We ran a maths session after school, and invited parents to come along and see how they could help their children by ensuring they have regular access to the tutor. We have found that the ability gap tends to spread wider the older children get. Maths-Whizz is highly effective at finding the right level to tailor progress matched to a child's ability and pace of learning. However, for more able

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students, it's important to recognise they need to learn the content of a maths lesson in school before practising on Maths-Whizz at the higher levels, otherwise they can struggle with understanding. The virtual tutor doesn't replace face-to-face lessons; it augments learning that has already taken place.

“ What has been the impact? ”

We've found since implementing Maths-Whizz, that our pupils have become better mathematicians, because it enables them to practise what we teach in lessons. It's tailored to the needs of each child and pitches work at the right level. Children (and some adults!) often have a bit of a confidence issue with maths. However, the more practice they get, the more confident they become. Maths-Whizz offers exposure to things like repetitive counting games and adding and subtraction problems, providing overlearning opportunities. It also shows different ways of tackling the same problems and helps to apply learning moving forwards.

WILL IT WORK FOR YOUR SCHOOL?

- Smart working - no marking means the burden is taken away from busy teachers.
- Embeds learning - skills developed in class can be practised at home.
- Individually tailored - progress is matched to a child's ability and pace of learning.
- Visual and appealing - structure is balanced according to need.

START THEM **EARLY**

Parents increasingly value the use of technology in schools, a new survey has revealed

According to new research, more than a third of parents believe children should start using tablets, computers and smartphones from the age of three at home, while 12% think babies and toddlers aged three years and under should have access to devices.

A further 24% approved of giving kids access to tech at the age of three and above in a "controlled environment" at nursery.

The findings, from a study carried out ahead of this year's Bett Show (March 23-25), are all the more surprising because they reveal changing attitudes among parents about what they value about their children's education.

Parents and carers said that the quality of IT equipment and training was more important even than the quality of the headteacher when picking a primary school place for their child, and that teaching IT skills such as coding were more desirable than developing artistic or music skills.

Using technology and online data easily and safely was a leading priority for 22% of parents, while coding and IT skills were favoured by 18%. The survey of 1,017 parents and carers of children who attend nursery showed that 70% of mums and dads approved of giving youngsters access to tech before they start reception. Just 14% said children should first get access to tech when they start school in reception from age four to five years, while

nine per cent wanted pupils to wait until they are in Y1.

The figures highlight how technology use has become a normalised part of childhood - particularly in the pandemic when desperate parents turned to screens for both home-schooling and entertainment.

TECH AT DRAPERS MAYLANDS PRIMARY

At Drapers Maylands primary school, in Essex, teaching about tech is a standard part of the curriculum from a young age.

Trudy Spillane, the principal, said: "Our children arrive at school intuitively using screens because their parents might have given them a phone to play with and they can navigate it easily by touching the screen.

"As they go through school, however, it soon becomes apparent that there are other skills they need to learn, such as logging on and using a qwerty keyboard. Our approach here is that this is the generation of children growing up with tech, and they will need digital skills for the workplace."

Teachers use a range of technology in the classroom, including visualisers and interactive whiteboards, which are used for games, research, watching clips, writing and drawing.

Pupils also use a wide variety of education apps and online resources on iPads, such as

Purple Mash, Mathletics and Read Write Inc. In the early years, they play with remote control cars and walkie talkies, which introduce them to how technological devices work.

During lockdown, the school used Alexa as a means of communication between classrooms when bubbles made it difficult for staff and pupils to mix, to make announcements or to play music around the school.

PRIORITISE SPENDING

Trudy thinks carefully about how she spend her budget.

"It's important to note that there isn't a lot of money sloshing around for technology, so we have to prioritise how we use it. For example, we have bought a few iMacs, as I believe it's more important than buying banks of desktops and it's the technology the children need to learn to use for the workplace. The iMacs last for around five years so it's also a cost-effective purchase.

"I plan around an infrastructure where devices can be matched up and used together. The days of trundling trollies loaded with laptops up and down corridors are gone here, as that would also use up valuable time in setting them up. IT is in the fabric of every classroom."

PARENTAL APPROVAL

Trudy said that parents were "impressed" with the amount of technology available at Drapers Maylands because they were often unable to supply this at home beyond a mobile phone or tablet. "They're grateful that we expose them to so much, even from a very young age, because this is something that can be lacking outside of school," she said.

"We also have a range of equipment and technology in school that they wouldn't have at home, such as visualisers, that the pupils can use confidently. They're surprised and delighted at what their children are growing up to be able to do because they're exposed to technology so early on. Adults don't always understand the basics of computing or coding and, in some cases, possibly not even how to use a laptop if this isn't something they use for work.

"Parents tell us they have noticed an improvement in their children's skills set, and have mentioned that they talk about devices, such as interactive whiteboards, and are able to explain what they do and what their purpose is, demonstrating a good understanding of the equipment."

THE UK AND US COMPARE NOTES ON TECHNOLOGY USE DURING THE PANDEMIC

A study carried out by EdTech gaming company Kuato found that parents' and teachers' experiences of technology were broadly similar in the two countries during the school lockdown, though attitudes sometimes differed.

At least 70% of parents had the essential equipment for remote learning in both regions, but infrastructure varied, with 61% of UK and 56% of US households having access to online resources and virtual classes.

When asked what aspects of technology they thought would most shape learning in the next five years, 55% of UK and 60% of US parents believed virtual reality and social gaming would have a major impact. However, more American (81%) than UK (77%) parents and carers thought this would be a positive experience. Among teachers the figures were 74% (UK) and 72% (US).

The top two challenges among teachers in both countries were also similar. Both found meeting the individual needs of each child difficult and often felt overwhelmed by the prospect of remote teaching and learning. Engagement with children and the protection of pupils online were the other major concerns.



HOW TO ENHANCE TECHNOLOGY USE:

- Introduce technology both discreetly and explicitly. If a specific skill is required, teach children how to do or use that particular thing. At other times, practitioners can model the use of technology and children learn new skills without even realising it.
- Educate being mindful of the future, focusing on the present and considering the past by drawing on prior experiences. In our home corner, for example, we have a range a technology related items that children can use for role play, and this includes old computers and mobile phones to familiarise them with devices.
- School budgets are tight, so think carefully about how spend your money. Prioritise your needs. Be mindful of compatibility between different devices; ensure that what you're buying will enhance teaching and learning and consider the longevity of what you're purchasing so that it is cost-effective.

LEARNING LESSONS FROM ONLINE TUITION

Jane Ferguson discusses how remote tutoring has impacted outcomes for pupils, while **Adele Key** offers advice on how to implement support

At first, we were as worried as any other school about the impact of the pandemic on our children.

At Sharmans Cross Junior School in Solihull, with 419 children on roll, we had started some school-led tutoring involving our teachers and TAs which focused on reading, writing and maths. But, as time went on, it became evident that we needed additional support.

That's when we decided to buy in external tuition, using some of our pupil premium and the government's recovery funding.

MEETING EXPECTATIONS

We focused on our Year 6 mainly because, at that time, we were still expecting them to do SATs in summer 2021. But when these were

dropped, we felt it remained vital that they received the additional support to prepare them for the transition to secondary school.

We also included some Year 5s we felt would benefit from the tuition. The Year 6s received tuition in English and maths while our Year 5s received support in English only.

We had to think about exactly which pupils would benefit most. We looked at all children who were not meeting their age-related expectations and chose pupils who their class teachers felt were most likely to respond well to online learning, based on their experiences during school lockdowns.

For these pupils, we set up blocks of tuition, which consisted of 15 weekly sessions delivered by Pearson tutors. For other pupils we continued with teacher and TA tuition support.



ACCESSIBILITY

A big consideration was access to devices at home, as well as good broadband connection. We worked with parents to ensure that they were happy for their child to receive the additional support which, for most pupils, was to be delivered at home.

We liaised with the teachers of all participating pupils and, where possible, teachers attended at the beginning of each

BE AWARE OF YOUR TECH CAPABILITIES

At Woodlead Primary School, we have a strong sense that online tuition is having a big impact on pupils.

They see the links between classroom learning and their tuition sessions and they tell us regularly that the tuition sessions are helping their learning click into place in class.

We've had an excellent experience with our tuition support and we'll continue with it even when all the pandemic-related grants have gone. It does need some investment in time and preparation but, once it's up and running, it's very

straightforward and the benefits come back by the bucket load.

If you're considering going down the tuition support route, I would advise that you:

- Use time at the start of a block of tuition sessions to meet the tutor online. Taking the time to develop a relationship and to talk through the background of each child makes it easier for the tutor to hit the ground running. We have met all of our children's tutors and have built good relationships with them.

- Be aware of your technology capabilities to get the best out of online tuition. Sharing devices doesn't give pupils the best experience, so each child needs access to their own. We've found that iPads work less well, so I'd recommend using either laptops or Chromebooks.

- If the tuition happens during the school day, it ideally needs to be outside the classroom to avoid background noise. We're fortunate to have access to our ICT suite and library. Headsets with microphones are also a must-have.



WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

A report from Pearson and Bramble analysed the effect of live online tuition on primary school pupils during the government-funded National Tutoring Programme's (NTP's) first year of operation.

It is based on more than 42,000 hours of online tuition and 3,000 assessments delivered by Pearson tutors.

Key findings include:

- A 67% increase in assessment scores following catch-up tutoring across all subjects, key stages and regions.
- Primary pupils made an average improvement score of 80%, compared to 61% at secondary.
- KS2 maths students eligible for pupil premium funding showed the greatest progress; these students doubled their post-tutoring assessment scores (this was in part due to their low baseline scores in pre-tutoring assessments).

The report is available at <https://tinyurl.com/yc7tn2zu>

child's first tuition session to talk to the tutor about the child's needs and then stayed to make sure that the child was happy.

As we had so many children attending the sessions, some of these initial meetings had to be done at an alternative time, either on the phone or via email; however, those kick-off sessions were really important in establishing a good rapport between tutor, child and their teacher.

OUTCOMES

Getting feedback on each child's progress was important. Our teachers saw how children were benefitting from the tuition because they were grasping concepts in class with which they had previously struggled, but the feedback we got from

tutors gave us a richer picture of how the children were progressing.

Our Year 6 teachers reported that the children were enthusiastic about the tuition and their confidence had increased.

The technology side didn't present any challenges for the children either. Up to that point, they had been using Teams for online learning, but they took to the Bramble platform we were using to support tuition quickly, and liked the whiteboard feature.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE

Parents could also see jumps in confidence in their children's homework. Those observations were confirmed by tests carried out by the tutors before and after the 15-week course of sessions. These showed that the percentage of correct answers from pre-tutoring tests to post-tests increased by an average of 71%.

As a result, we decided to continue with the tuition support this year.

LOOKING AHEAD

The make-up of the children this academic year is slightly different as our funding agreement requires 65% of the pupils supported to be receiving pupil premium funding.

We've learned some valuable lessons since that first block of tuition. Because the majority of the children receiving support this year are from more disadvantaged backgrounds, we have had to think harder about the availability of technology. Access to required broadband speeds or the lack of devices in a family is an issue we have had to overcome by lending equipment to pupils, or making arrangements for those children to do the tuition sessions in school.

We have made changes to scheduling as well. At first, we concentrated the weekly sessions over two nights but looking back this was a big ask for our teachers who were expected to attend each child's first tuition session. We now spread those sessions over the week.

External tutoring has been an incredibly positive experience. It took some time to set things up but that initial investment has been worth it.



Jane Ferguson is deputy headteacher of Sharmans Cross Junior School, Solihull.



Adele Key is deputy headteacher at Woodlea Primary School in Chester-le-Street.

“Access to required broadband speeds or the lack of devices in a family is an issue we have had to overcome”

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– Elspeth, NASENCO delegate



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Dr. Mark Turner

Mark is Real Group's professional and academic lead and Managing Director. He

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SMALL STEPS TO IMPROVE RETENTION

Can we stop heads and teachers from leaving
the profession? asks **Iain Ford**

Headlines warning of a recruitment and retention crisis in teaching aren't new. Week after week, another report is released to say that teachers are planning to quit, and that the most common reasons for this exodus are workload, pay and the pandemic.

A recent Teacher Tapp survey of more than 2,000 primary teachers found that over a quarter of classroom staff were considering leaving in the next three years. While most would like to continue in education in some way, many want to seek completely different careers.

There is no silver bullet to stop this - but there are actions worth considering to chip away at this problem.

THE CURRICULUM

Primary teachers have an enormous amount of diverse content to learn - the national curriculum is extremely broad, and they need to be across it.

Specialist teachers can help take the burden off staff in some subjects which require that extra bit of knowledge. When

asked which subjects benefit most from specialist teachers, MFL was the winner - with 78% of primary teachers saying that languages are taught significantly better by someone with a dedicated skill set. Two other subjects which gathered the most votes were Music (75%) and PE (64%).

Another idea, thought more radical, would be to consider the content of the curriculum itself. Are there subjects that could be entirely removed? While most teachers felt like they didn't want to remove anything, 24% of primary teachers responded that they thought languages should get the chop. Far behind in second place was drama, with just 10% of the vote.

And while swimming may take up less than half a page of the 200-page primary curriculum, keeping it is popular among

“More than half of
primary classroom
teachers reported
having been
shouted at by
parents”



primary teachers - just 5% would like to see it removed.

GETTING AN EARFUL

While seeing parents at the school gates each day was often a positive experience for all, tensions can run high.

More than half of primary classroom teachers reported having been shouted at by parents. However, it is heads who are on the receiving end of most of these outbursts, with a staggering 95% of primary headteachers saying they have been yelled at by a parent.

Are these results a feature of the pandemic? After all, the pandemic has broken down the barriers between teachers and parents even further. Sadly, this does not seem to be the case. Since Teacher Tapp last asked this question in 2018, not much has changed, with 58% of teachers reported having been yelled at in 2018, rising to 59% now.

WORKING PART-TIME

Because of Covid, there has been more focus on flexible and part-time working than ever before. Working part-time is even being pushed by the Department of Education as a way to resolve retention issues. Yet two-thirds of teachers say that working part-time in their school would be very difficult.

This was particularly the case in primary schools - with 57% of classroom teachers saying that working part-time would be challenging in their school. This is increasingly true the more senior you are. Ninety per cent of primary heads agreed that flexible working wouldn't be possible.

In January 2020, when Teacher Tapp last asked the same question, 69% of teachers said that working part-time would be difficult. Now, that percentage has slightly decreased, but only to 66%. Hence, while other sectors have become much more flexible, it doesn't seem like schools are changing at the same rate.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to solving retention issues, views like these can help other teachers and policy makers to understand the day-to-day issues that teachers are facing. Through this understanding, we can work towards making headlines of a retention crisis a much rarer sight.



Iain Ford is a data analyst at Teacher Tapp. For more snappy insights, and to be part of the panel, please

join in via the free Teacher Tapp app – available to download for iOS and Android. You will learn something new every day.



FILLING THE SKILLS GAPS

What experience and traits do leaders really need, asks **Barry Cann**

The world is evolving at a fast rate, and we are all expected to keep up. From the advancement of technology to the increasing need for an eclectic and wide skillset, you need to stay on the ball if you're in a leadership role.

Headteachers are no exception.

Your academic competencies are not always sufficient. Aspiring school leaders need something a bit extra.

DIGITAL SKILLS

In an increasingly digital world, it is fundamental for future leaders to know how to benefit from innovative tools.

This doesn't mean you need to be an expert in computer coding or programming. However, it's important to understand the benefits of modern technology. The best way to acquire this skill is to dive in and give new technology a real go. In the long term, this will help you utilise innovative, useful equipment that will aid teaching and learning in your school.

MANAGEMENT

Showcasing sound management skills is vital. If you are willing to climb the work ladder and take on the role of a leader, you will have to prove you are capable of managing a team, a budget, potential risks, and time.

A leader must be able to bring several colleagues together, guiding them towards the same objective while also satisfying their personal ambitions. From coaching team members to evaluating their improvement, team management requires great dedication.

You should always be able to keep an eye on budgets and finances. What should money be spent on? What changes should be made to control costs? Risks must be considered as well.

Time management is crucial too. The clock ticks on and several tasks have to be accomplished in a short amount of time.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Practical abilities are essential, but the value and need for soft, emotional skills is gradually rising too - from keeping teams engaged to building relationships and showing an interest in colleagues' wellbeing.

Understanding your team members' needs and offering them emotional support are key components to the success of your school. Knowing your team on a personal level will help you create an inspiring, trusting, and collaborative environment.

COMMUNICATION

School leaders must be able to build bridges between their fellow workers, ensuring that all operations proceed smoothly, and need to learn and understand how to communicate clear, concise messages.

ADAPTABILITY

Headteachers need constantly to adapt to change, and to be flexible and open-minded.

One way to strengthen your adaptability skills is to learn new things and push yourself out of your comfort zone, as this allows you to understand how to deal with unfamiliar situations. When a problem or an unexpected scenario arise in the workplace, you will be both quick to adapt and fast to respond.

As the world of work develops and changes in step with the times, candidates and employees are required to widen their skillsets. From digital predisposition to managing abilities, there are several skills that will make you stand out.



Barry Cann is technical director of OCCMS.

Governors – stand up for your headteacher

When Ofsted delivers bad news, heads need support, not retribution, says **Kenny Frederick**

I have often thought how lucky I was to have ended my 17 years of secondary headship on a high.

We had a successful Ofsted shortly before I retired and were in a good position financially. Results were continually improving, and we had a great staff team fully committed to our inclusive policy and practice.

It might have been very different. My school was always 'on the edge' and could have gone either way. We had a great many - often extreme - challenges in my years as principal. It was tough but we managed to get through them and moved forward.

But this was not always the case. Years earlier, unexpectedly, Ofsted had judged us as Requires Improvement. It was an horrific experience; and in my role at Headrest (a helpline for headteachers), it is one I relive every time I speak to a headteacher who has either had a negative inspection or is awaiting the imminent phone call.

Their fear, angst and anxiety - and sense of failure - is raw and they feel alone. I can empathise because I have been there. In my case, I planned to resign. How could I face my staff, pupils, colleagues and my governors as well as the parents?

I felt ashamed. I was a failure. But I was also lucky because I was supported by my governors, staff and by the local authority SIP and others.

"I was trusted more than a small team from Ofsted, who knew very little about our school and our context"

Kevan Collins (he was not yet a Sir) was our director of education. He persuaded me not to resign; he said he had confidence in me.

So I stayed, I survived and we thrived. I am recounting my experience because so many are not given that same chance to right whatever has gone wrong. I was trusted more than a small team from Ofsted, who knew very little about our school and our context. That trust was not misplaced.

Living on the edge

Now, as a chair of governors of a large inclusive primary school, I am conscious of the support and challenge I need to give our headteacher, who also leads a primary school that is always 'on the edge'. It takes very little to set it off course. It is only the determination and expertise of the headteacher and her team that have kept it going and working well over in recent years.

To some extent, it's also down to luck. Some heads don't have a stable team around them and don't get the support from their

governors, CEOs and LA personnel. Some have been abandoned by the hierarchy and are on their own. They are seen as failures. They become the scapegoat and are often forced to go following a difficult inspection, or complaint. Governors are (in maintained schools anyway) the ones who make these decisions, often on the advice from the LA.

As a volunteer with Headrest, I hear horrific stories of Ofsted inspections and other incidents that have left heads severely damaged - emotionally and mentally, but in many cases physically too. What is worse is the conduct of some governing bodies, who follow the lead of an unsupportive LA or MAT CEO and immediately move to get rid of the headteacher.

No excuses

The mantra of no excuses (because of Covid) is a familiar one. During my headship we were constantly told that poverty is no excuse, even though we know it is. Poverty has a real damaging effect on the wellbeing and performance of children and schools in deprived areas do an amazing job trying to help pupils overcome the many barriers they face.

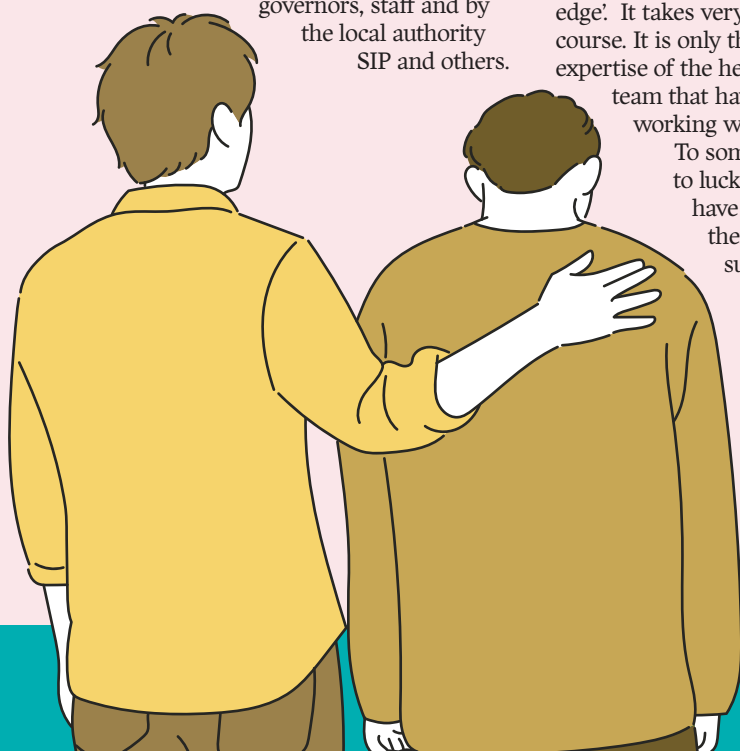
My plea to governors is to stand up for your headteacher. Don't let them be bullied out of a job. You know the school well. Ofsted inspectors come in for a day occasionally and often do not understand the context nor do they understand what inclusion means on the ground. You do.

Don't let things happen without your knowledge and challenge OFSTED / the LA / the MAT and make sure you really take the headteacher's wellbeing seriously. That is your responsibility.



Kenny Frederick is a retired secondary head, chair of governors and education consultant.

Headrest (headrestuk.co.uk) is a helpline set up by four retired headteachers who have worked throughout their careers in challenging circumstances, to support heads in post.



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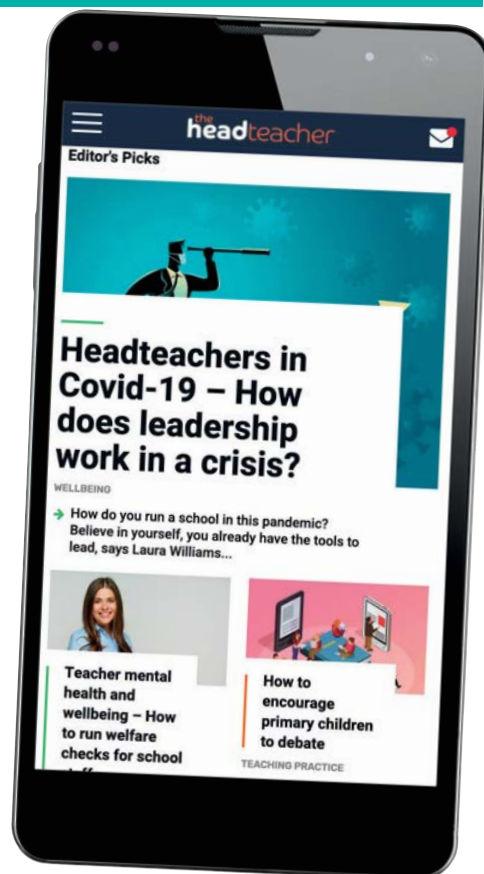
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WHAT'S TRENDING

1

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5

GDPR three years on – Is it part of your school's culture? bit.ly/3xtiLzr

Building a powerful leadership team

Caroline Caille discusses how to prepare colleagues for the big challenges

I recently heard about a newly appointed headteacher whose staff were feeling very frustrated. Every time they approached her with an issue, she said, "I am empowering you to solve that problem for yourself." This started me thinking about why this was unhelpful. Surely leaders are meant to empower others? I eventually realised, however, a key detail: the headteacher was new and she and her staff simply didn't know each other well enough yet - and as a result, they hadn't established trust.

For a team to lead effectively they need to trust each other. As author Patrick Lencioni tells us in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, we need to build "vulnerability-based trust": a deep confidence in teammates that allows admission of vulnerabilities without fear of negative consequences.

Trust will allow your team to:

- challenge each other
- establish a shared language
- work towards this goal
- be open and transparent with work and updates
- share mistakes made

If individuals in a team focus solely on their own goals and personal status, then the collective results of everyone will be diluted. Lots of tasks may well get done, but at what cost? Longterm, sustainable change will not be achieved.

CREDIBILITY IS KEY TO TEAMWORK

Building up credibility between team members takes time. In my role as an achievement partner at Teach First, I work closely with school leaders to support their development. During my three years in the role, I've seen first-hand how this credibility is gradually established between leaders and their teams. I've seen individuals grow in confidence because they know that they are trusted by their teammates to get the job done.

Programmes like Teach First's Leading Together give your team time to reflect on

how effective they are as a unit. So often teams are made up of highly effective practitioners, but they are not always highly effective at the same things. Exploring what they are doing well individually and, as a team, allows them to work much more collaboratively.

BETTER TEAMS, GREATER OUTCOMES

Teams need to feel comfortable enough with each other to be able to have the challenging conversations necessary for real change. These conversations need to use the team's breadth of experience and expertise to create new options and make better decisions.

One individual can come up with solutions to all sorts of problems, but great school leaders make the best use of their teams - and the more diverse the team, the greater the variety of experience that can be drawn from. For example, a primary school leadership team that has no early years or KS1 experience is unlikely to be as effective as one where all key stages are represented.

One of the most effective teams I worked with was a school in a highly deprived and multi-cultural area. The team reflected the diversity of its community and was the richer for it.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Individuals are, of course, accountable for outcomes related to their role, but it is an understanding of the collective accountability that will lead to a culture of support and encouragement, and, ultimately, a culture that brings about change.

It is important to empower your team members and not just leave them to get on with it alone. Creating vulnerability-based trust involves admitting mistakes, sharing weaknesses and acknowledging others' strengths. Everyone must feel able to admit when they are unsure of how to tackle a challenging task and ask for help.

Whether it is learning about your school's culture, or refining your curriculum, the very act of working as a team will help to build trust and a real understanding of your group's strengths.



Caroline Caille is a former headteacher, currently Achievement Partner at Teach First delivering the

Leading Together programme to schools in the East Midlands. She also supports new and aspiring headteachers on the NPQH programme.



THEY NEVER COVERED THAT IN TRAINING

Daniel Woodrow unpicks the daunting period of early headship with advice based on first-hand experience

My first day as a headteacher. I stood before my new team and breathlessly told them not to worry about the previous year's poor results because publishing data was just like putting out the trailer for a film and that we were still editing the final version of our movie and I was excited to be there and couldn't wait to get to know everyone and that if we supported each other and gave it our all then we could do anything.

Then I went on paternity leave for two weeks.

When I came back, my feet didn't touch the ground. I was putting out fire after fire. Ofsted, legal challenges by parents, a disastrous fire inspection, applying for the substantive post, the local authority threatening to close our Specialist Unit – I had it all.

I was starting to think that maybe I was part of some Truman Show-like reality programme when I got a call from a local superstore. They were running a competition to design a poster about recycling and were displaying two posters from each school with jars underneath where shoppers could place a token to vote for their favourite. The posters were anonymous, but someone had been caught on CCTV taking tokens out of other jars to put into ours and the store wanted to know what I was going to do about it.

They certainly didn't cover that in any of my training!

Headship is full of the unpredictable. It's what makes it the best job in the world, but it can also leave you feeling like you're drowning. To those who are thinking of giving it a go (you definitely should, by the way), here are some of the things that I learned during that tumultuous first term and in the weeks and months that followed.

straight away. Mark Twain encouraged his readers to eat a live frog in the morning because nothing worse can possibly then happen to you for the rest of the day. In other words, have that conversation or do that work that you are dreading most first thing and then it won't be hanging over you all day. It will feel like a weight has been lifted.

NEVER ENOUGH TIME

Time works differently when you're a headteacher. You're constantly chasing your

tail or time feels like it stops altogether and you find yourself willing it to go faster. You usually get around to eating lunch at 3:00 p.m. (always order something cold!) and you never get around to doing what's on your to-do list. If you do keep a list then don't feel bad about adding what you've done, just so you have the satisfaction of crossing it off straight away!

You could also extend this to keeping a list of everything that you do each day for the first hundred days - however big or small. There will be days when it feels like

“Headship is full of the unpredictable. It's what makes it the best job in the world”

PUTTING OUT FIRES

One thing I learned about those blazes is that you're better off putting them out

you won't have got anything done, but you almost certainly will have, and this helps you focus on that.

GET TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL

As a new head you can feel under pressure to make an impact immediately, but don't feel that you have to get everything done straight away. Take the time to get to know your school and your staff. In the first term I introduced things that I knew worked, but it wasn't until my second year of headship that I was ready to introduce things that worked specifically for my school. That's not to say that you can't have a few quick wins though. For me, it was donuts in the staffroom every Friday and the introduction of a Tidy Trophy presented each week in assembly to help combat what staff perceived as messy classrooms (this was phased out soon after an over-zealous School Council pupil announced in assembly that a class would have won that week, but the state of the teacher's desk in their room was "appalling").

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

When it comes to getting to know your staff, have an open mind. I don't know about you, but when I was a teacher I never really read the previous year's reports for my class. Everyone deserves a fresh start and we all respond to different people in different ways. It's the same for staff and I really learned the value of having an open mind and showing staff that you trust and value them.

You may have been in a situation yourself where you felt like you were in a bit of a rut, and it took a change of school or leadership for you to feel like yourself again. I know that was the case for me once upon a time and I hope that I have been able to pay that on to people in my team.

LET OFF STEAM

It's also really important to look after yourself, and building a network is a vital part of that. We all need people to lend an ear while we

HOW TO SURVIVE AS A NEW HEAD

- **Trust your staff – cakes are nice, but strategies to support workload and remove unnecessary pressures are better**
- **Have an open mind – people can surprise you!**
- **Give yourself time – you don't have to do everything at once**
- **Quick wins – show staff you're listening and will act where you can**
- **Draw upon your recent time in the classroom. Staff felt I had more authenticity from only just being out of the classroom when talking about teaching and learning**
- **Eat The Frog – don't put off the difficult tasks**
- **Record The First 100 Days and you'll be amazed at what you've achieved**
- **Embrace whole school events. Red Nose Day, World Book Day, Children In Need are fun and help to bring everyone together**

let off steam. You may be lucky and have a brilliant mentor from your Trust or LA, or a fabulous induction programme, or a great Chair of Governors. I had all three, but I didn't make the most of them while they were there and when they were gone, and things were tough, there were times when I felt like the loneliest person in the world.

REMEMBER WHO'S 'BOSS'

Remember that you are the head! It may sound silly, but I bet there are things at your previous schools that you always wanted to do but were never allowed to. I had always wanted to organise a sleepover for Year 6 in the school hall before they left and was constantly frustrated that none of my previous headteachers were keen. But guess who's desperately trying to stay awake throughout the night every last Friday of the school year now?



Daniel Woodrow is headteacher at St Gregory CEVC Primary School in Sudbury, Suffolk. His blog is at: eattheheadship.org.wordpress.com

HOW NATASHA'S LAW HAS CHANGED CATERING

New labelling legislation will have major implications for schools, says Graeme Holland

The tragic death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse in 2016, after eating a pre-packed sandwich, prompted a major change in food labelling laws.

Many of us will know the story because of the courageous campaign waged by her parents. The 15-year-old died following an allergic reaction to sesame seeds, which were an unlisted ingredient in the pre-packed baguette. The packaging contained no specific allergen information, and therefore Natasha thought it was safe to eat.

Changes to the law, which came into force on 1 October 2021, require any business selling pre-packed food for direct sale to include full ingredients on the product label, with allergenic ingredients emphasised. This marks a big change for all caterers and organisations providing catering services, including schools.

The stakes are high. We know that food allergies are common in children, and often include eggs, milk and nuts. It is estimated that around one in five children has some sort of food allergy, so the potential implications of getting this wrong are huge.

Children's immune systems react in different ways to certain foods. One type of food might be safe to eat, but the body mistakes the proteins in it as harmful and responds by producing an antibody. Some symptoms will be more severe than others, ranging from a runny nose and itchy eyes to skin reactions, breathing difficulties, nausea, and diarrhoea.

For schools with a high concentration of pupils on-site, there are serious implications, both for children's health and their own duty of care.

I work with hundreds of schools around the country and the safety of the food they sell on site is always a major priority for them. Although most school catering will be run by a catering contractor, that's not to say that school leaders can simply forget about law changes like this. Schools should be fully aware of the regulations, how they have changed and if the legal requirements are being met to the letter so that they can ask

questions of their catering contractor and challenge them if necessary. It is a crucial element of sound supplier management.

There will, of course, be schools that handle their own catering, such as stand-alone primaries, that sell pre-packed food directly to pupils, and they must ensure that the regulations are strictly followed. Headteachers and business managers need to be across the law changes.

The regulations for England, Wales and Northern Ireland come under the Natasha's Law legislation and schools will need to

make sure that the food and ingredients they provide pre-packaged on-site meet all the labelling requirements of the new legislation.

WHAT DO THE NEW RULES SAY?

So, what is Natasha's Law? Under the new rules, food that is pre-packaged for direct sale (PPDS) must display the following clear information on its packaging:

- The food's name.

CHECKLIST



Have all catering staff and catering support staff received allergy awareness training? Where are the training records retained and how frequent is the training?



Does the catering team have all staff and student allergy requirements? How do they monitor each individual ordering the food items? Do they have a picture of the person and a list of known allergens? How often is this checked and updated?



Has an allergen matrix been made available for dishes served? This should be dated and current to the menu offering for that day/week/fortnight and should cover all items on the menu offering.



Have all dishes been reviewed for allergen contents? Does the catering team continue to review the individual ingredients and how frequently do they do this? Suppliers may substitute ingredients or products that

previously didn't have an allergen contained so the packaging label should be cross-checked with the school's allergen matrix and updated when required.



Have all purchased prepackaged items been provided with the list of all ingredients, with allergen details in bold type?



Who is responsible for checking that food allergens are managed within the catering team to comply with the current legal requirements?

NEXT STEPS:

The Food Standards Agency has published guidance about the new requirements for pre-packaged for direct sale (PPDS) food, available at [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk). Further advice and support are available from Judicium's health and safety team judiciumeducation.co.uk/health-and-safety

- A full list of ingredients, emphasising any allergenic ingredients.

The Food Standards Agency has published guidance about the new requirements for PPDS food, explaining that this is classed as food that is packaged at the same place that it is offered or sold to consumers. Therefore, if schools provide pupils with food that caterers pre-pack on-site, this will need to comply with all the necessary regulations.

It applies to food that people can select for themselves or that which is offered from behind a counter.

PPDS doesn't apply to food that is not in packaging or is packaged after the consumer orders it, or food packed by one business and supplied to another – this must already have full labelling, including all ingredients with any allergens emphasised.

All food vendors, including schools and school caterers, should already have put the necessary changes in place but it is worth recapping so that you and your leadership colleagues know what to look out for if something is amiss.

For schools, the new labelling requirements will apply to all food they make on-site and package, such as sandwiches, wraps, salads, and cakes. It applies to food offered at mealtimes and as break-time snacks. It will also apply to food the pupils select themselves or that caterers keep behind the counter.

Natasha's Law is a catering management issue because a key aspect of maintaining food safety standards is to be able to effectively keep track of your catering and using the best tools to manage it.

There are specific catering management questions that Natasha's Law asks, such as 'what is the impact for trusts with multiple sites?' and 'how will it affect the procurement and purchasing of catering services?' These questions should be discussed with everyone responsible for managing catering facilities within their schools.

Robust systems should be up and running along with rigorous checking of the system to ensure that any changes of ingredients used within dishes are checked against the allergen matrix, updated when required and labels amended to reflect those changes.

A tragedy was the trigger for these big changes in food safety law, a scenario that no-one would ever want to risk repeating. With these new regulations and our diligence we can all make sure that that is the case.

“Around one in five children has some sort of food allergy, so the potential implications of getting this wrong are huge”



Graeme Holland is Head of Health and Safety at Judicium Education, advising on health and safety, HR, safeguarding, clerking/governance and data protection: judiciumeducation.co.uk

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ARE ALL SUBJECTS EQUAL?

Which subject would you happily hand over to a supply teacher? asks **David Rushby**

When I was at school, my passions were art and sport. It was where I was able to gain my self-worth as a boy. My school reports glowed in these areas.

Inevitably, this had a lot to do with the teachers. My art and PE teachers loved me, and I loved them too. This condition is the holy grail of teaching, and so we must aspire as school leaders to create this dynamic in any and every subject.

I recently posted this tweet: *'I spoke to a cover supervisor the other day and they told me that they covered the same two lessons for each teacher in the school. What two lessons do you think they were?'*

It referred to the fact that, in primary, it tends to be the same subjects that are handed over.

In contrast, there are some areas that are rarely selected for cover. These are high-stakes lessons where you want the best teacher, and that's the person who planned the lesson and knows best how to deliver it.

As a headteacher, my priority would be to cover PPA, and put the rest up for discussion.

"This is a lesson that can end up being rolled out via the photocopier and yet it's such a special and significant subject"

But what are we saying about the subjects that end up being casualties from these arrangements? These are the questions that require consideration when seeking to create subject equality.

The replies to my tweet presented a consensus. From over 50 responses in just over an hour, most got one subject correct and over half guessed both. What does

this say about these subjects and more importantly, are we forgetting that for some children, these will be their reason for coming to school? I wouldn't assume they are badly taught, but they have been handed over for a reason.

We all want to offer an exciting broad and balanced curriculum, but are all subjects really of equal value?

I'm guessing that by now you'd like me to share the answers. The common and correct responses were RE and music. The other suggestions were PE and MFL. Otherwise, there was little deviation.

For both of these subjects, I see the challenges. I'll start with RE. A subject that I now understand and love, but didn't as a teacher and can't remember as a pupil. This is a lesson, like MFL, that can end up being rolled out via the photocopier and yet it's such a special and significant subject - and one of the few places in the curriculum where the word 'love' gets a mention.

If you were to ask me, as a teacher, which subject I would hand over for PPA cover, it would be music. And I play both the guitar and drums. This is because I've always found the source of the subject problematic, with references that were often irrelevant to me and to the pupils. Also, I can't sing. How can I demonstrate how to perform a 'solo ensemble' using my voice? I've tried. The children either laugh or visibly feel sorry for me.

All of these reflections may be honest and typical, but they inevitably require investigating and challenging before seeking to transform, support and inspire. It's important to evaluate how staff feel about every subject for us to be in a position to truly capture all hearts and minds.

It would be well worth asking the children where their talents and interests lie, too. As headteachers, we may be distracted by solving the short-term logistical PPA issue, but if the same two subjects are taught this way in the long-term, we could see collateral damage. This may be a primary issue, but the implications for secondary are obvious.

There is no doubt that there can be subject inequality, and we can only provide solutions when we acknowledge that the problem exists.



David Rushby is a former headteacher and director of Nautilus Education.



BUILDING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Meaningful partnerships improve learning and empower the workforce, says **Dan Thomas**

The Learning for Life Partnership began in 2015 with a simple mission: to work in partnership to improve life chances for all. We are currently a group of five primary schools in East Cheshire and we work hard to create meaningful partnerships with other educational organisations, schools and the communities we ultimately serve.

Whilst each of our schools is unique, we know that together we are stronger, and take every opportunity to learn from each other. As a result, we have taken practical steps to build a culture of collaboration – something from which everyone in the Partnership, and the wider community, can benefit.

Often, 'collaboration' is used as a business-minded buzzword to describe something which we all do every single day. Whether you're working together to prepare pupils for their SATs, or wrestling with costumes for the nativity play, staff working together towards a common goal is not unique. But putting together system-wide structures which facilitate this in the most open, constructive way takes time.

Above all, you can't afford not to have a consistent, collaborative approach to running a school trust, from systems and processes to collaborative networks throughout the organisation. Especially in an educational landscape where academisation and trust formation is becoming increasingly necessary, these close connections are vital.

CREATING NETWORKS

The Learning for Life Partnership is fortunate because all our schools are in one specific area. This allows us to coordinate cross-partnership INSET and professional development, aligning our school calendars, and making sure staff from across the Trust are working to the same timetable. We realise many trusts are spread across a region, or indeed the country, and appreciate that this can cause some logistical headaches when organising cross-trust initiatives.

With that said, there are a number of low-cost, practical steps which can be taken to bring academies together and build positive networks across your trust or partnership. The key audience for this is arguably your staff, who in turn can share expertise and

experiences with each other. This can help to strengthen the bonds between your academies and help to underline the culture you as a trust or partnership want to create.

'YOU'RE [NOT] ON MUTE'

The shift to online learning and communication as a result of Covid has actually opened up new avenues for this integration. We have implemented collaborative networks across all subject areas

this open forum, there is also the opportunity for schools to learn best practice – or just benefit from previous experiences – from others across the Partnership, and to reflect the way we wish to operate.



which are online and accessible, providing a forum for teachers to share specific subject-based concerns and ultimately helping to reduce teacher workload and stress.

More so, we now host our cross-partnership staff forum largely online. This has representatives from across the Partnership and from all layers of the staff body, giving them another forum for open and honest feedback, something which promotes psychological safety and a culture of trust and openness. By providing

SUPPORTING ASPIRATION

Alongside these virtual forms of support, we offer a wide range of practical opportunities to staff. At the LFLP, we have more than 260 staff, many of whom have worked across different schools in our Partnership. This carries a number of benefits. Members of staff feel empowered and that their career goals are taken into consideration, while the Partnership can benefit from a workforce which is acutely aware of the specific challenges that face each individual school.

To facilitate this, we have a cross-site CPD coordinator, who can scout out opportunities for staff both internally and externally, while advising on what a specific member of staff wants to achieve. We've had some notable successes as a result of this.

For example, one of our teachers, Siobhan Watts, has quickly and brilliantly progressed from her role as a classroom teacher at Leighton Academy to assistant principal at Wheelock Primary, thanks to her hard work and our keen focus on continuing professional development. Alongside this, the Partnership has also funded Siobhan to complete a Masters degree in Leadership and Management – a qualification which will help her both now and as her career progresses.

“Members of staff feel empowered, and their career goals are supported”

This progression can take place away from the classroom as well. Joining the Partnership in 2015, Nova Harvey initially acted as School Business Manager (SBM) for Wheelock Primary. By gaining an insight into the wider processes underway across the Partnership, she is now a full time business and operations manager supporting all our schools. We're not saying every member of staff should ultimately strive for a cross-MAT role, but we do believe it benefits everyone to have structures in place which can enable this.

SHARING EXPERTISE

By fundamentally believing in staff and supporting their progression, you have a huge amount to gain. Whether it's the expertise and insights which can be provided by formal qualifications, or the cross-trust knowledge and understanding that comes from movement between academies - placing our most valuable resource where they are needed the most.

Yet this process also makes staff feel valued and can help instil a collaborative and caring culture. More widely, these practical steps and offers have helped to onboard new academies in the Partnership and help them to understand and appreciate our values early on. These measures will help us to grow as a Trust and to promote our values to the schools within the partnership.

It may sound strange, but we also believe that investing in staff can have a positive impact even if they leave. People move jobs for all kinds of practical and personal reasons, but we have always been adamant that we want to be a Partnership which is not only a good place to work, but so a good place to come from. This includes offering secondments at a senior level to schools outside of our organisation.

COOPERATING MORE WIDELY

We take our civic role in East Cheshire seriously and want to contribute to an ecosystem of high-quality educators who can spread best practice and inspire students across the region. We support other multi-academy trusts in a variety of ways through school improvement services, access to our subject networks, support in developing culture and values as well as serving as trustees. We have also supported numerous trusts with sitting on LA working parties to decide on funding.

Our internal networks foster collaboration and positively influence how we interact with the wider region. We insist that our academies are active partners in their local clusters, sharing practice and gaining knowledge from their experiences. Additionally, we work closely with the unions to ensure our policies and procedures offer the best working conditions for employees.

More tangibly, we are a delivery partner for one of the National Professional Qualification (NPQ) delivery organisations which enables us to develop our networks and support other schools' staffing. These networks helped enormously when we partnered with educational organisations from East Cheshire, Cheshire West and Chester to coordinate a response to the leadership challenges faced by engaging with an apprenticeship provider.

Through all these actions, we hope to make good on our promise to work in partnership to improve life chances for all, whether that be students, staff, or the wider region. A culture of collaboration helps everyone and can transform the way your trust runs.



Dan Thomas is CEO of the Learning for Life Partnership.

GETTING RECRUITMENT RIGHT

Attracting great staff is costly and time-consuming but the best investment for your school, says **Sue Cowley**

No matter how lovely your buildings and grounds, how impressive your curriculum, or how exciting the equipment you offer, the best resource in any school is always its staff. Research consistently demonstrates that the quality of outcomes for children is directly linked to the quality of teachers and other staff working with them. This means that recruiting and retaining the right people is a key factor in school improvement.

The Sutton Trust has published various pieces of research looking at the impact of teachers on student outcomes, identifying six components that contribute strongly to 'teaching quality'. These include strong pedagogical / subject knowledge, effective classroom management skills and an understanding of how to create a positive classroom climate.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Recruitment not only takes up valuable time, including that of headteachers, but it can clearly be a costly process. The Department for Education estimates that

schools in England spend up to £75 million a year on recruitment advertising.

In 2019, the DfE published its strategy for recruiting and retaining teachers. It identified four key barriers to recruiting and retaining good staff, outlining the steps that the DfE planned to take to overcome these.

These steps included an active focus in the new Ofsted framework on reducing workload and transforming support for early career teachers. The report acknowledged there has been a fall in teacher retention in recent years, with the worrying statistic that "over 20% of new teachers leave the profession within their first two years of teaching, and 33% leave within their first five years."

There has, however, clearly been at least a temporary increase in workload involved with the introduction of the new Ofsted framework, as leaders and teachers get to grips with the new approach – though it remains to be seen what impact the changes will have on workload overall.

Early anecdotal reports also suggest that mentors are finding it time consuming to wrap their heads around the Early Career Framework, which was introduced to support new teachers.

Recruitment and retention are closely linked, with any increase in teachers leaving the profession having a knock-on effect for schools when it comes to finding new staff.

A focus on staff wellbeing, and an offer of flexible working approaches, can support schools in reducing staff turnover.

DOUBLE WHAMMY

Brexit looks likely to have an ongoing negative impact on both the teaching workforce generally, and also the recruitment of teachers. Official data shows that teachers from EU countries applying to work in English schools fell by a quarter in 2019.

A senior policy adviser at the NAHT noted that, rather than displacing UK born teachers, staff from the EU had probably been "filling gaps and mitigating a recruitment and retention crisis". He pointed out that modern foreign languages could be one of the school subjects most affected.

Labour market analysis for the mayor of London suggests that the capital is going to



be harder hit by Brexit factors than the rest of the country. London may be disproportionately impacted by loss of EU workers, with 14% of London workers being EEA nationals, as opposed to 6% elsewhere.

Although teacher training applications surged briefly in 2020, during the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, this year's applications have fallen 23% from the previous year. This will obviously have a knock-on effect on teacher supply going into the future.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

With a limited pool of staff looking for new roles, advertising and marketing vacancies effectively is crucial. There are a range of options for advertising teaching jobs, including outlets such as the TES, Schools Week and less education specific websites such as Indeed. Think about how you can appeal to a diverse range of applicants, for instance advertising via publications aimed at specific community groups.

The DfE has also made an attempt to address the impact of advertising on school budgets by creating a free teaching vacancies website.

Local recruitment strategies often tend to work best in finding the right person to join your staff team. The Recruitment Gap report notes that only one in 10 staff is likely to consider moving 100 miles for a 'dream job'. Those who were willing to move tended to be either younger, or male. Experienced teachers are much more attached to their current location and less amenable to moving for work.

Thinking closer to home, you might advertise in the local press or ask parents to share details of the role in local Facebook or WhatsApp groups. Some local authorities also offer a jobs service on their website and again, this is likely to appeal to a larger pool of potential applicants.

BEST PRACTICE

Attracting great candidates can be hard for schools in an Ofsted category, and also for schools in out of the way locations, such as some coastal areas. Schools need to be creative, and to offer perks, in order to attract applications.

Perks might include a lower teacher marking load, a reduced timetable or highlighting opportunities for promotion within the school. Because recruiting the right staff potentially has such a strong impact on children's outcomes, schools might make use of pupil premium money to support this.

The DfE's Teacher Retention Strategy report notes that flexible and part-time working opportunities are "increasingly important" with some teachers leaving the profession to access more flexible working options. While an average of 40% of women in the UK work part time, only 28% of female teachers do so. Finding a way to increase opportunities for flexible working is likely to improve both recruitment and retention in your school.

THINKING LONG TERM

One of the keys to effective recruitment is to see it not as something that only happens when a member of staff hands in their notice

FIND OUT MORE

Three key reports on recruitment and retention

1. **The Recruitment Gap Report** – <https://tinyurl.com/33hcyu8t>
2. **DfE Recruitment and Retention Strategy** – <https://tinyurl.com/2s3mrt2v>
3. **Flexible Working Guidance** – <https://tinyurl.com/4cnue8hd>

and you need a replacement, but as an ongoing aim. Building relationships within the local community, and with prospective employees, helps you tap into a potential group of applicants who already know and understand your school.

For instance, you might run workshops for parents, breaking down barriers and encouraging them to think about how children learn. This in turn might encourage them to consider a career in education, perhaps working with you as part of a school centred training course or on an apprenticeship scheme. In our setting, we have recruited several parents over the years, supporting them to take additional qualifications over time.

WEBSITES AND ADS

Your website is your shop front and prospective new employees will look closely at this. Ensure that the latest vacancies are fully up to date, and that it gives a great flavour of what your school is like. Videos can help prospective candidates gain a sense of your school at a time when it might be tricky to organise visits, due to the pandemic.

Think carefully about the wording of your advert, emphasising the benefits that you can offer the candidate, as well as what you hope that they will bring to your school. If your school has a social media presence, use this to boost the chances of finding suitable applicants. Encourage parents to spread the word – there is little more powerful as a marketing tool than positive parental word of mouth.

“There is little more powerful as a marketing tool than positive parental word of mouth”



Sue Cowley is a teacher, author, teacher trainer and presenter. Go to suecowley.co.uk

Logitech Pen

Balance technology with traditional approaches to get the best out of your pupils



logitech | for education

AT A GLANCE

- Works with any USI-enabled Chromebook, tablet and learning app
- Helps fully utilise Chromebook devices and learning apps
- Looks and handles like a traditional pen, making skills transferrable to paper writing
- Versatile and hugely functional for learning

Reviewed by: Adam Riches



Technology in primary school classrooms can significantly increase the effectiveness of learning, but there is a fine balance as learners develop emerging skills. The Logitech Pen bridges the gap between traditional school work and the powerful technology available for learners, meaning that teachers can get the best from their pupils.

At first glance, the pen resembles... well, a pen. One of the most impressive features of this piece of kit is that it looks and handles like a traditional pen. As such, it is exceptional for a full range of learners and teachers alike. What's best is that it isn't cumbersome or too dainty; it's perfect for little hands and the soft, non-slip grip means that pupils can easily use the pen regardless of level. The realistic shape and size means that skills are directly translatable to paper writing.

Luckily, the physical aspects of the pen are just the start. The Logitech Pen is designed with no-pair functionality making it easy for students to pick it up and start writing, and ideal for younger, less technologically literate pupils. On a full charge, the pen has 15 days of regular school use, giving a pupil plenty of time. Impressively, you can get 30 minutes of use with just a 30-second charge, meaning in the likely event that a student forgets to recharge their pen, it can still be used. Charging is conducted using the same USB-C cable that comes standard with a

Chromebook device – it couldn't be more simple.

Designed for a variety of applications, the Logitech Pen works seamlessly with chromeOS and many apps on USI-enabled Chromebooks. This little tool allows pupils and teachers to couple traditional study with new technology, adding to the value, participation and engagement levels in the classroom.

The Logitech Pen also makes a number of different pen strokes. The 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity give students the ability to write more clearly than they would with fingers or a rubber-tip stylus. Together with a variety of third-party apps that support palm rejection, the Logitech Pen makes it easy for students to work naturally, helping them study efficiently and effectively. Write, highlight, colour... the possibilities are endless.

Tough technology is a must in schools – primary children are notoriously heavy handed with school equipment. The pen is tested to meet military standards, and designed to withstand drops up to four feet (1.2 m). With a spill-resistant design, it will take some serious knocks, making it perfect for primary school students. In this day and age, resilience to cleaning is also important. The pen is tested to withstand frequent cleaning with disinfectants, designed for long-term, shared use in school environments where repeat cleaning is needed.

the
headteacher teach co
LEADING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

VERDICT

- ✓ Versatile and incredible breadth of application straight out of the packet
- ✓ Easily and quickly charged
- ✓ Adaptable to a number of learners' styles allowing the same individualism as a pen
- ✓ Marries traditional school work with technology
- ✓ Tough and resilient build

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to support staff with planning and assessing or if you are looking or a full curriculum rewrite. Also consider if you are looking to build collective efficacy and consistency in your school.

Find out more at tinyurl.com/tp-LogitechPen

EDTECH

IRIS

Ed:gen

IRIS Ed:gen Management Information System

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-fliers.

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

Improve education with this selection of resources, equipment and services



TRANSFORM SPACES

At Canopies UK, the team turns outdoor space into multipurpose shelters for learning, play and dining. With 30 years' experience designing, manufacturing, and installing outdoor canopies, Canopies UK helps schools get more from their outdoor space in every season. The dining canopies reduce crowding at breaktimes and seat more kids

during lunch. Playground canopies provide shelter for outdoors lessons and activities, and entrance canopies provide shelter for guests and parents. Every canopy installed by the company is built using site-specific calculations to guarantee safety and comes with a manufacturer's warranty.

canopiesuk.co.uk



IMPROVE READING PROGRESS

LexiaUK is proud to share the findings of its first large-scale UK study: This two-armed randomised control study, published by the Education Endowment Foundation, focused on pupils identified as struggling readers in Year 2. The independent evaluation found that children who were offered Lexia made

the equivalent of two additional months' progress in reading, on average, compared to other children. These results received a high security rating on the EEF padlock scale. In addition, the cost of delivery was reported as 'very low'. For further details, visit lexiauk.co.uk.

2 SAFEGUARDING IN STYLE

Visitor management is an area of great interest to schools, not just because of GDPR but also for safeguarding purposes. Many schools highly recommended idXtra's visitor management system VisiTapp, which is user-friendly, flexible and affordable. Using VisiTapp, schools can deal with visitors, contractors and supply teachers – keeping 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.

idxtra.com



4 A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Since 2003, turn IT on has worked exclusively with schools. The company provides a comprehensive range of hands-on ICT & MIS support, GDPR services and training to more than 950 schools, local authorities and MATs across the UK. The consultants are another member of your school team and will always go the extra mile to help you make the best use of ICT across the curriculum. With over 18 years' experience delivering ICT support to primary schools, turn IT on knows how to ensure schools get real value for money from their ICT investment.

turniton.co.uk





5 PARENTS' EVENINGS MADE EASY

Parents Booking's video meetings are revolutionising how parent-teacher appointments take place, while lowering traditional barriers to parent access, and helping schools grow interest and attendance. Parents simply make appointments with teachers online and these are automatically converted into video meetings, which multiple participants can join and experience

all on one web page, on any smartphone or computer. Parents select appointment times that suit their availability and can advise teachers of issues or discussion topics in advance; and best of all, schools are saved from having to create hundreds and thousands of video meetings manually. Contact hello@parents-booking.com, or visit parents-booking.com



7 OUTSIDE EXCELLENCE

Over 2000 happy schools can't be wrong! For over two decades Nomow has been installing artificial grass in schools countrywide, creating ideal, safe outdoor areas for schools all year round. Nomow surfaces are all-weather and extremely hard wearing, installed to any shape and any size. Transform all those unusable or unsightly areas into great usable

spaces – all year round! Step onto Nomow and feel the advantages instantly. Nomow provides an alternative surface to paving, tarmac, safety surfacing... and mud! Nomow looks and feels like real grass, it's beautiful and easy to care for – there's no mowing, no mess and no mud. [Nomow.co.uk](https://nomow.co.uk)

6 GET THE MESSAGE

Schools looking to buy, hire or service voice and data two-way radio communication systems can turn to DCRS, recipients of the Queen's Royal Warrant and supporter of manufacturers including Motorola, Hytera and ICOM. Also providing bodycams and other applications to clients throughout the UK and Europe, DCRS' technical excellence, product support and accreditations for quality assurance are all part of its exceptional client service – as is its commitment to providing technical expertise throughout your product's lifespan. [Dcrs.co.uk](https://dcrs.co.uk), **0800 043 2688**



8 SAFE, CLEAN AIR

Rensair's portable, hospital-grade air purifier delivers safe and effective indoor air quality. As per SAGE guidelines, it combines HEPA filtration with germicidal UVC light to trap and destroy airborne pathogens. No ozone and no harmful side effects. In an independent Covid test, a particle reduction rate of 99.99% was recorded in 30 minutes. Rensair is a fraction of the cost of an in-built HVAC system, and in winter, cleaning the air instead of opening windows can save a small fortune in heating, offsetting the capital cost of multiple air purifiers. For a free consultation, visit rensair.com



Has Covid reduced teacher churn?

Sue Birchall says improved retention rates in schools due to the pandemic may hide underlying challenges among staff

It has been an unprecedented two years with disruption to our daily norm almost beyond belief. This has led to a significant change in our professional lives and those working in the education sector are no exception.

Staff retention during this time improved considerably. For example, according to DfE published data, the number of teachers leaving in the year to November 2020 fell by 17%. This was in most parts mirrored by the support staff, and certainly in my school we had a significant reduction in the numbers moving on. Whilst this reduction did not extend to NQTs, there are signs that the new Early Careers Teacher Programme will help to ensure future retention.

STRESSFUL STABILITY

There can be no doubt that this level of stability contributed to the consistent approach the sector took to maintaining students' learning during the various lockdowns. However, it comes with a sting in the tail; the increased workload, anxiety and stress that has been felt by many in the sector heralds a possible exodus. A paper published by the Education Policy Institution in June 2021 highlights some worrying data about the numbers of staff that may leave the industry as early as 2022 - many to other professions.

The Department for Education has taken steps to address what is recognised as a national problem and created some guidance on an Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (available on gov.uk in the guidance section). There is increased recognition that staff turnover may be significant in coming years and staff retention is aided by a good wellbeing culture.

But how do we create a culture of better wellbeing in such a way that it is consistent and manageable?

It is counter-productive to have an approach which relies on specific staff to implement, manage and amend their practice when required. This will add significantly to their workload and in many cases be counterproductive. The same is true with making it a top-down policy, which adds pressure to your senior team. What is needed is a culture change that satisfies all staff requirements and can be integrated within the day-to-day workplace.

PLAN FOR WELLBEING

When we think of staff wellbeing, the desired outcome is often improved attendance and retention. The way to do this is through creating an environment in which staff feel happy and content; it's a holistic mindset.

We will all have encountered staff who feel they are being unfairly treated or are unhappy in the workplace. A wellbeing strategy should help to address their concerns. Listening to those within your setting and carrying out surveys will identify key challenges, and this solution-focused approach will result in fewer moans and an easier set of objectives.

Staff wellbeing is largely linked to two areas: physical and mental. Physical seems the easiest to address and it is often visible, but not always. Be sure to take a pro-active approach. Monitoring staff absence and ensuring back-to-work meetings take place

will allow you to pick up any concerns. Mental wellbeing is arguably harder to identify and can consist of five areas, as recognised by the NHS. These are:

- Relationships and strong bonds with family and friends
- Social contact
- Enjoyable and rewarding job role
- Eating well
- Regular physical activity

Basing your strategy around these areas will inform the solutions you implement as a school, which might include flexible working, or training and development. There are also opportunities to sign-post all the other support available for your staff through unions, and Employee Assistance Programmes, for example.

But drafting and implementing a strategy isn't enough. There also needs to be a culture change in how you deal with concerns, challenges and health problems, which is carried out with the staff and not done to them.

"It is counter-productive to have an approach which relies on specific staff to implement, manage and amend their practice when needed"



Sue Birchall is director of business and outreach at The Malling School. Access the DfE Education Staff Wellbeing Charter: gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter



Spotlight on... visiTapp Visitor Management System

With the market swamped with glamorous VM systems that are not cost-effective, VisiTapp does more for your money than any other

VisiTapp is extremely flexible advanced and adaptable, and can be tweaked to meet your school's precise requirement

Why choose our VMS? ✓visiTapp can:

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Instantly ping a list of who is in the building by hitting the big red button

★
Provide attendance monitoring for students at lunchtime

★
Record any extracurricular, CPD, ad hoc or non-timetabled events

★
Improve your security and safeguarding by telling you who is on-site at any given time

★
Print visitor badge labels with QR codes which can be scanned and registered into the system

★
Be fully customised to include relevant features, and its interface can incorporate your school's logo, motto etc

★
Link to the most popular access control, MIS and email systems

★
Record DBS certificate information and alert when they expire

★
Track the amount of time students, staff, supply teachers and contractors spend in the building



Always get 5 stars for safeguarding!

Using the idXtra system for total security:

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Full attendance tracking: AM, PM and lesson registration, all linked to MIS



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