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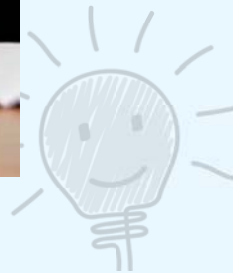
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www.juniormemorychampionship.com



From the editor



Two years have passed since we first went into lockdown. I remember well the sense of anticipation, near-panic and dread – and for some, excitement – that rippled through both schools and families as the prospect of home-schooling approached. While it's important to acknowledge that Covid continues to cause challenges in schools, we have also emerged through the other side with different perspectives, ideas and more confident about using technology. Some experts believe we progressed in two years what might, in normal circumstances, have taken decades.

Which is why I'd like to highlight the articles in the EdTech section of this issue, which focus on some the lessons learned during the pandemic. I was particularly moved by Teaching Award winner Jackie Birch's recollections of this time and her amazing personal digital journey.

The pandemic has, of course, also resulted in a whole new set of challenges in schools around wellbeing and mental health. Ben Levinson urges headteacher colleagues not to regard mental health negatively, while Katrina Brown turns our attention to supporting pupils with social and emotional problems. Meanwhile, Lara Jeffries asks what senior leaders can do to stem the flow of teachers out of the profession.

When editing the articles submitted to *The Headteacher* for each issue, I'm always struck by the extra mile and a half so many heads and teachers go to improve their pupils' prospects. Take Race Leys Primary, in Warwickshire, which has launched its own 'university' of time-tabled and extra-curricular activities that expose children to new experiences that may well shape their future career options and opportunities.

Do let us know what innovative schemes and initiatives are taking in place your school.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dorothy Lepkowska
dorothy.lepkowska@theteachco.com
February 2022

Our experts this issue



Harriet Pattison,
senior lecturer
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Studies, Liverpool
Hope University



Kate Robinson,
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of initiatives
dedicated to
Sir Ken Robinson



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head of
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The Key



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at Learning in
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C of E Primary
School, Essex



Sue Cowley,
author, teacher
trainer and early
years teacher

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“The DfE is pursuing a risky, unnecessary and expensive process”



Emma Hollis, executive director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT), is navigating choppy waters for ITT providers

Q. The DfE has recently published its response to the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) market review report. What did this conclude?

In 2021, the government announced a review to make well informed, evidence-based recommendations on how to make sure all trainees receive high-quality training. This was to include meeting trainee targets and implementing a system to meet the needs of schools. The review concluded that all existing and incoming ITT providers must comply with a new set of quality requirements and therefore go through an accreditation/reaccreditation process to ensure they have the ability and capacity to meet these for the start of the 2024-25 academic year. This has caused a considerable backlash and ITT providers are understandably concerned about the timeline for accreditation – not least because the first round of applications closed two months after the review was published – the sheer amount of work involved in the application process, and the practicalities of implementing some of the quality requirements.”

Q. You previously described the review as a “catastrophic risk” to teacher supply – why?

We warned, in our response to the consultation, that the recommendations collectively represent an immediate and catastrophic risk to the teacher supply chain and quality and availability of provision. It could force some providers out of the market and further undermine teacher supply at a time when teacher training applications are falling. However, our concerns have been ignored and the government is intent on pursuing a risky, expensive and entirely unnecessary accreditation process. The timeline for the accreditation process – with two application rounds taking place in the first half of 2022 – demonstrates a complete lack of recognition of the pressures in the school sector and shows the government to be unresponsive to the incredible strain everyone is under.

Q. What key things do headteachers need to know about the reforms?

Headteachers and senior leaders who hold

dual roles as SCITT directors have a lot to do – and quickly! Specific requirements were confirmed and funding commitments made for the development of intensive training and practice opportunities, and to support lead and mentor training. There are also key requirements around ITT structures and partnerships, and curriculum content and design. However, the requirements relating to mentoring are significant. Lead mentors/members of a mentor leadership team will have initial training of 30 hours and 12 hours of annual refresher training. General mentors will undertake 20 hours initial training and six hours of annual refresher training. They will be required to

support trainees for a minimum of 1.5 hours per week.

Our own research on mentoring found that 97% of ITT providers are concerned about the time and capacity for this, and a further 93% reported they do not expect the availability of mentoring to improve within the next 12-18 months. Solutions must include facilitating more release time from other school responsibilities.

Q. Where are we in the overall ITT accreditation/reaccreditation process, and how are you supporting providers through it?

We have already had the first application round, with the second one coming in June, for all providers wishing to deliver ITT from September 2024. This consists of two stages: a paper-based exercise (carried out by DfE, supported by Ofsted) and, the second, an ongoing development process.

This will take place between the point of accreditation and the start of programme delivery during which providers will be asked to submit a number of curriculum samples, and discuss their mentoring plans and partnership proposals. We are supporting our



CAREER TIMELINE

2006
Completed BSc
Psychology at
the Open
University

Trained as a
primary teacher
2009

2010
Year 6 teacher, St
Thomas Aquinas
Catholic Primary
School,
Buckinghamshire

PGCE Programme
Manager, Two Mile
Ash Initial Teacher
Training
Partnership
2014



members through the process of accreditation and have held a series of knowledge-sharing events.

In a poll commissioned during our December event, 79% of respondents said they would apply to be a lead provider in the February application round and 9% in the June application round. A further 7% said they would seek to join another provider who is applying in February, and 1% would seek to join another provider who is applying in June.

Only 3% indicated that they would exit the market altogether at the end of 2023-24. We are committed to working with school-based ITT providers to ensure the sector remains at the forefront of developing the next generation of teachers.

Q. What is the bigger picture showing around applications to teaching - should heads be worried about recruitment?

The situation is not good. This year began with the news that many in the sector had

“The timeline for the accreditation process shows the government to be unresponsive to the incredible strain everyone is under”

feared but also predicted some time ago: the release of new DfE figures which showed the Covid-related spike in applications to ITT programmes is over, with numbers for ITT down by 24% compared with last year.

The figures also reveal that recruitment levels are lower than in pre-pandemic years, and 8% down on the same time in 2019, for example. Sector leaders have called for the government to give teacher supply a shot in the arm if it wants to prevent the teacher supply challenges of the last decade re-emerging, also highlighting how important factors such as pay continue to be.

Q. What are your main priorities going forward?

Given the issues around teacher supply, the last thing the profession needed was a root-and-branch review of ITT provision, which has generally been extremely effective in supplying this country's schools with around 30,000 new well-trained teachers every year.

However, the political direction of travel is set, and our main priority is supporting providers to remain in the ITT market and

then navigate the landscape effectively. This will include a focus on mentoring in schools, which will also impact on schools' ability to deliver the requirements on intensive training and practice, and subject knowledge enhancement. More widely, SEND, mental health, wellbeing and diversity, equity and inclusion are on our priority list. There is a lot we do not know in terms of the future, and we can only take at face value the wording in the ITT market review report which states “the importance of enabling providers of different types and sizes, and in different contexts, to operate in the market”.

We are also told, and this is in black and white, that applicants will be assessed against the new quality requirements, and there is no preferred size, structure of partnership, or curriculum. There is no minimum or maximum number of providers who can become accredited. Government has also indicated that the accreditation process will recognise the need for development over time and will not seek to exclude providers who have capacity to meet the quality requirements but who, for legitimate reasons, may need more time to develop their offer.

2015

Head of Teaching School, Milton Keynes Teaching School; and Head of Educational Strategy, Inspiring Futures Through Learning Multi-Academy Trust

Executive Director, NASBTT

2017

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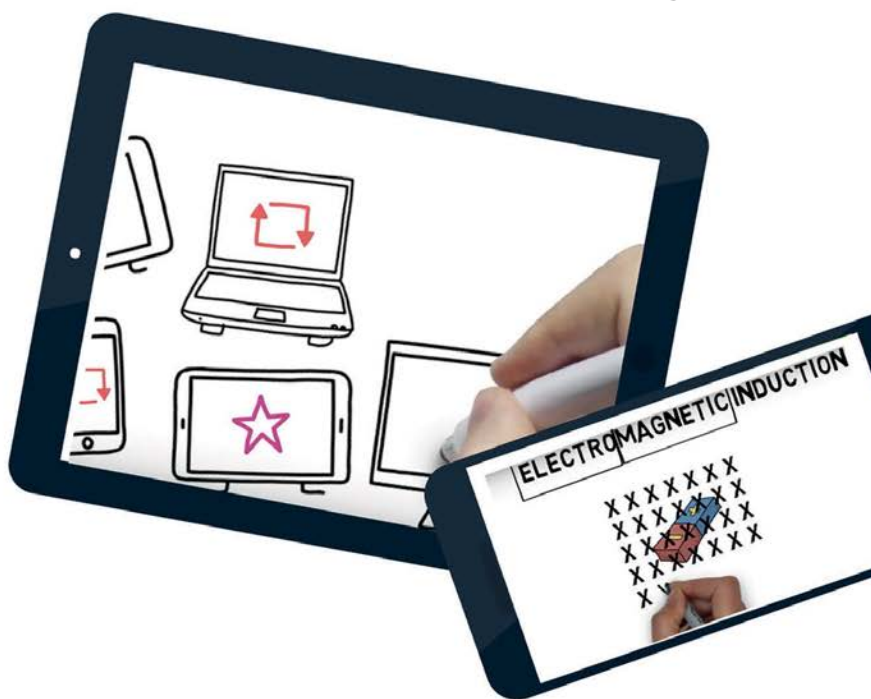
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School Improvement

LET'S GET HONEST ABOUT HOME EDUCATION

There's no reason why schools can't work more closely with home educators and stop the culture of suspicion and mistrust, argues **Dr Harriet Pattison**

Home education numbers have been increasing nationally and across the globe for a number of decades now.

The responsibility of parents to ensure the education of their children is enshrined in the Education Act of 1997, either by regular school attendance 'or otherwise'. 'Or otherwise' generally, although not always, means home education.

Families taking this option might be motivated by push or pull factors or a combination of these. Pull factors might be their own pedagogical ideas and learning philosophies, the desire to spend more time with their children, family lifestyle, happy home-educating friends or memories of their own successful home education.

Push factors are more likely to involve concerns about schools – general ones about school culture, testing regimes, the National Curriculum, academic focus and early starting age. Or they could be more specific, related to their child's individual experience: bullying, unmet needs, school trauma or refusal.

Then there is the practice of 'off-rolling', where schools encourage parents to deregister 'difficult' pupils saving schools from having to deal with persistent absences or resource heavy demands. The whole is contextualised by the generally poor public image of home education and by a policy and media stance that unquestioningly advocates school as the proper location for education.

Matters have come to something of a head in recent months over the proposed compulsory register of home educated children. For families who have taken their children out of school as a last option or for those who felt forced out of school



when they would really rather have stayed, the register adds insult to injury. For those who have actively chosen to home-educate because they want to be with their children and fully involved in their education and childhoods, it feels like a disrespectful mistrust and unwarranted intervention.

It is time to start moving the issue to more productive ground and to get honest about both home education and school

“The whole is contextualised by the generally poor public image of home education”

and perhaps most importantly on the ground in between the two. Whilst Children's Commissioner Rachel de Souza insists that all children are better off in school and Charlotte Ramsden, ADCS president, argues that a register of home educators will protect children, the lived reality for many families is that school is neither a good nor safe experience for their children.

The organisation Square Peg and its membership group Not Fine in School, was set up to help the growing number of children struggling with school attendance and currently stands at over 12,000 members. Underlying issues include bullying, physical and mental health difficulties and unmet SEND needs. But the result is always the same – untold unhappiness for the children affected and their families as school becomes an endless and debilitating struggle. Some of these children may be deregistered by parents able to home educate, others may have to struggle on, others may be off rolled by schools, wrestling themselves with the demands made of them and the lack of recognition of this type of problem.

Instead of blanket assumptions about school experiences, families and schools need to work together in productive ways.

Recognising the value of flexi-schooling and making this option easier would be a useful place to start. Children struggling with school attendance could move to tailor made hybrid options that might ease the stress and pressure of full-time schooling. Schools could be given the resources to reach out to home educated children, offering sports or social opportunities and bridging the divide between the two forms of education.

Home educating candidates have suffered from lack of venues and support in public examinations – schools, with an understanding of this issue, could fill that gap and even open up revision or exam preparation classes to independent child candidates. There is a rich world of possibility and support that lies beyond the demarcations of home and school that are being enforced by policies of suspicion and mistrust.

Home educators are crying out for better understanding and more productive ways to work together in their rejection of the compulsory register. It would be an enlightened mark of progress for education in all its forms if schools could step forward with them on this issue.



Dr Harriet Pattison is an author and senior lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at Liverpool Hope University.



COVID LAG FOR YOUNGEST PUPILS

Two years after the first lockdown almost a third of young children are not reaching learning expectations for their age, **Stephan Nicholls** reports

One of the largest reports into the impact of the pandemic on primary school pupils has found that millions of children are not achieving their age-related benchmarks, two years after the pandemic began and school closures disrupted education.

The Juniper Education study examined the impact of the pandemic on primary school children's learning from data of over half a million pupils representing more than 6,000 primary schools.

KEY FINDINGS

- Youngest pupils are worst affected - the report reveals that nearly one in three of all Year 3 children has not met age-related expectations in reading, writing or maths compared with around just one in five before the pandemic, when these pupils were in Year 1. In autumn 2019, 82% of Year 3 pupils achieved age-related expectations in reading, 79% in writing and 83% in maths. Two years later these figures have dropped to 68%, 58% and 69% of pupils respectively. The report indicates that not only has younger children's learning suffered the most during the pandemic, but it is also yet to show signs of recovery.
- Writing is the subject most affected - of the three core primary subjects, writing suffered the most from the pandemic. All year groups in the study saw steeper drops in writing than in reading or maths. The biggest fall in writing attainment was for Year 3, with only 58% of children being at

the expected level in writing, compared with 79% prior to the pandemic.

- Youngest pupils with SEN fall further behind their peers – the pandemic has raised new barriers for children with SEN, with the gaps widening between children with SEN and their classmates, particularly in Year 3. In 2019, the gap in attainment for Year 3 pupils with SEN in reading was 29 percentage points. Two years later it's 45 points.
- Inequalities growing between disadvantaged pupils and their peers – the Covid crisis has exacerbated inequalities by widening the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their classmates. In autumn 2019, 68% of disadvantaged children (those who qualified for Pupil Premium) met age related expectations in maths compared to 82% of their peers – a 14-point gap. By autumn 2021, only 55% of disadvantaged children were reaching expectations for their age in maths, 20 points behind their peers.

There is no doubt that the pandemic has had a damaging effect on primary school children's attainment which will take time, expertise and strategic thinking to overcome – particularly for the younger pupils. However, the data identifies some early signs of recovery in older year groups, and there is hope that we can start to look ahead to a more optimistic picture.

Stephan Nicholls is a former primary headteacher, now education consultant for Juniper Education and author of the report, viewable at tinyurl.com/htjuniper

How your library can boost wellbeing

Alison Tarrant and **Caroline Roche** say libraries can play a pastoral role in primary schools

One in six children has a mental health problem according to The Children's Society, and in the last three years the likelihood of young people having mental health problems has increased by 50%.

That means in your typical class of 30 children, five could be struggling with their wellbeing.

It's no wonder that schools are searching for ways to support their pupils' mental and emotional health. But could the answer already be there in the shape of your school library?

A new report – part of the Great School Libraries campaign run by CILIP (the Library and Information Association), CILIP's School Libraries Group and the School Library Association – based on interviews with librarians, suggests the school library can boost pupils' wellbeing in many ways.

The findings show there's an abundance of support for children within the library walls.

Safety and comfort

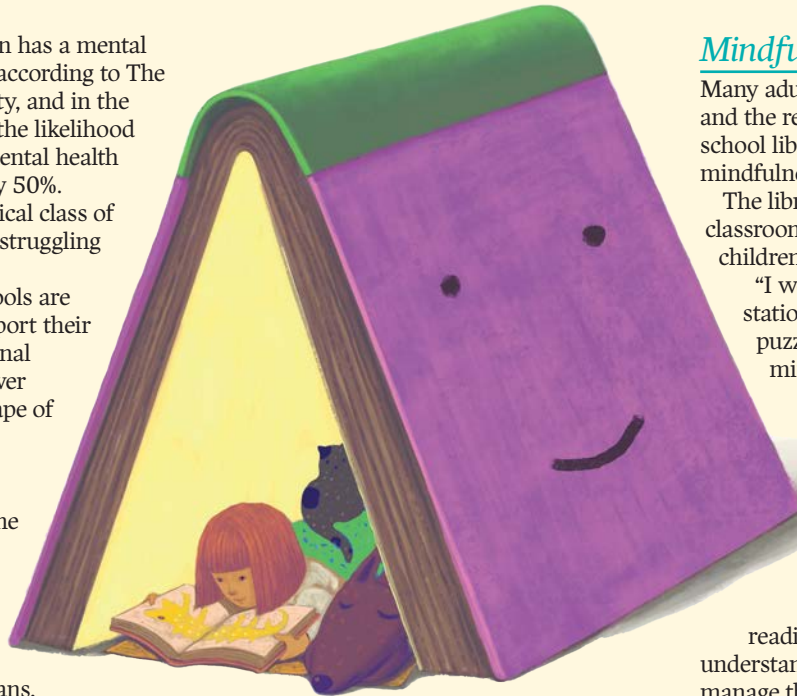
When children were asked to draw pictures of their ideal library spaces, the common themes which emerged represented feelings of comfort and peace. Children often use their school library as a refuge as well as a source of books.

Many schools design their libraries along the lines of a comfortable room at home and this can be particularly appealing to children who have difficult home lives, helping them feel safe at school.

As one librarian who was interviewed explained, "One of my main roles is to give the pupils somewhere safe to go."

Someone to talk to

The relationship between pupils and their school librarian is often a positive one and some pupils feel they can approach their school librarian with problems, rather than a teacher or other adult.



A librarian said: "I am not as intimidating as a member of staff, so you find yourself talking to the pupils and they invest a lot more into you than maybe they would necessarily in a teacher."

Given the right training, the librarian could be instrumental in spotting if a child is having wellbeing issues.

Fun and friendship

Many schools run programmes and clubs which are based in their libraries and these can support pupils' emotional health in different ways.

Some libraries have reading groups to help younger or less able students improve their reading skills, or schemes where children take on tasks to help with the running of the library. Other libraries host more informal groups such as chess or art clubs so children get to know the school library as a space with multiple uses.

One study participant said: "The reason that we run lots of different types of activities and events is to make sure that students who might not associate reading as a positive thing will still associate the library with something really positive."

Mindfulness

Many adults benefit from mindfulness and the report suggests that some school libraries are running mindfulness groups for their pupils.

The library is often quieter than the classroom, making it the ideal place for children to leave their worries behind.

"I would just set up a mindfulness station and we've got activities and puzzles, anything just to calm their mind. And we've got breathing techniques and

grounding techniques available for them to do."

Self-help

Children often benefit from reading material to help them understand their emotions and how to manage those feelings. For older children who are able to seek help independently, the library can be a rich source of support.

One respondent mentioned her school library's self-service system for books on mental health, meaning pupils don't have to present the items they are borrowing. This guaranteed anonymity helps reassure children they are not at risk of judgement from their peers.

With pupil wellbeing more important than ever, your school library can be a welcome source of support, offering children a safe space, new hobbies and a listening ear as well as a treasure trove of books.



Alison Tarrant and Caroline Roche are co-chairs of the Great School Libraries campaign. The report can be found here: tinyurl.com/librarypeace.



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Planting seeds of change

The fight to save the planet has captured the imaginations of pupils at a Cumbrian school, writes **Martyn Soulsby**

The carbon footprint of schools across England stands at almost 10 metric tonnes of CO₂ yearly. This staggering number left our students at North Lakes School not only shocked, but angry and put them on a mission to instigate change; they wanted green schools to become the norm, rather than the exception.

In response, we created an eco-programme, the aim of which was to channel our students' passion for the environment and use this to make meaningful changes in our school. This would not only help to reduce our carbon footprint, but also prove to students they could make a difference when they focus, organise and act together.

We didn't attempt to completely change the way the school operates all at once. Rather, we had to prioritise to be successful. This cohort of students decided to tackle our school's recycling habits and outdoor sustainability programmes. Their hope was once these areas of school practice were as green as possible, they would become self-sustaining. Then, students would be able to go on to tackle other areas in need of improvement, such as reducing water waste and ensuring our school busses are as environmentally friendly as possible.

READY TO RECYCLE

The first focus following lockdown was recycling, after our pupils discovered that 18-34-year-olds have the most pro-environmental attitudes compared to older generations, yet they are less likely to recycle than their seniors.

Our thinking was that if these young people start to recycle in schools, they will be more likely to do so at home and into adulthood.

Our strategy to achieve this was two pronged: we made practical changes across the school and ran an educational project. We created clearly labelled recycling bins that students could access freely and pinned posters around the grounds which outlined what can be recycled, and where.

“Securing trees was a challenge at first because this is not something covered by school budgets”

ClickView videos helped to explain the process of recycling and how it can save the planet, and we also used their curriculum-aligned, video-based Climate Change learning content. The videos cover a broad range of sustainability topics, and present expert opinions, statistics and historical references to contextualise the crisis we face.

Trees help combat global warming as they absorb carbon dioxide and provide a natural habitat for wildlife, and our students wanted to make sure we were utilising our outdoor spaces effectively.

To achieve this, we analysed our current school grounds and assessed where we could plant more trees and greenery. Securing trees was a challenge at first because this is not something covered by school budgets. We overcame this, however, when we discovered the

Woodland Trust offers schools and communities free trees.

We will soon plant these new green areas across our grounds to mark the school's 50th birthday. This project has been brilliant because it has taught pupils everything from the scientific analysis of flora to organisational skills and being mindful of others and the world around them.

A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

Discussions about climate change should permeate subject barriers, and not be restricted to classes on science or geography. We try to talk about green issues in as many lessons as possible. For example, students explore the statistics behind climate change theories in maths, and in art and design they discuss artworks that draw public attention to environmental emergencies.

MAKING AN IMPACT

We encouraged pupils to send letters to the local member of parliament about their environmental concerns, and we have discussed climate action in school council meetings too, which makes students feel empowered.

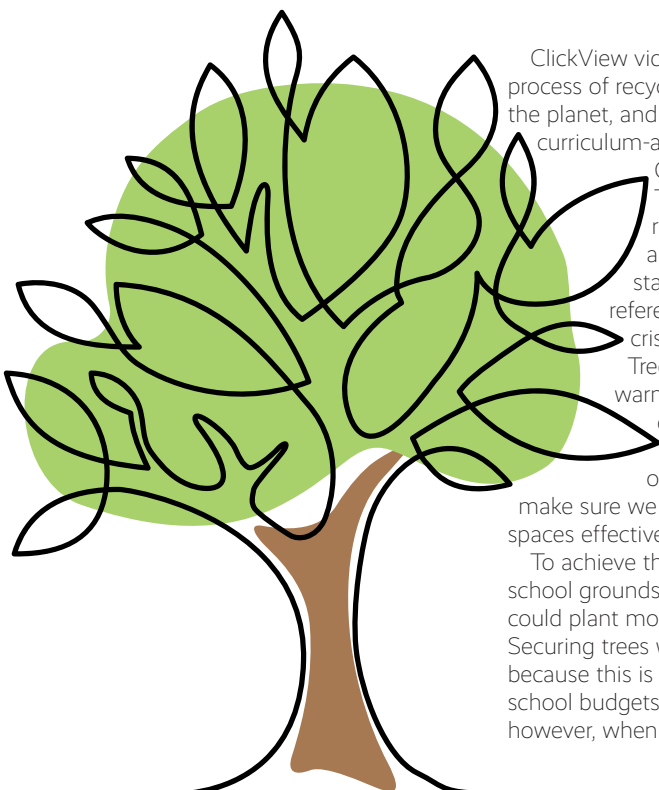
Eco Schools England incentivises educational institutions to become as green as possible by rewarding green schools with eco status, and we have begun our journey to achieve this.

We established an eco-committee to discuss green issues and how we can continuously improve our environmental impact. Students feel they're in control of the future of their school.

We also put environmental studies into the curriculum, ensuring all students can discuss the issues they care most about. This helps us contribute towards making a global impact, as well as improving the overall running of our school.



Martyn Soulsby is
computing lead, Year 5
and 6 class teacher and
SLT member at North
Lakes School, Cumbria.



CHANGING THE MATHS MINDSET

Mastering mathematics is about more than just good SATs results, says **John Canavan**

I have been championing teaching for mastery at Cambridge Primary Education Trust (CPET) since 2015. It was around this time that I was given the opportunity to go on a Department for Education exchange programme to Shanghai – where the concept was born – to observe maths lessons and attend lectures at a local university, before teachers from Shanghai then came to our schools in Cambridgeshire on a return visit. The experience led me to encourage the CPET school I worked in at the time to change to the maths mastery approach, and it was rolled out Trust-wide.

There are different interpretations of what maths mastery is but, for me, there are five big ideas – drawn from research evidence – that underpin this approach.

1. Coherence

Lessons are broken down into small, connected steps that gradually unfold a concept, providing access for all children. This leads to generalisation of the concept and the ability to apply it to a range of contexts.

2. Representation and structure

Representations used in lessons expose the mathematical structure being taught to provide a deep conceptual understanding: the aim of this principle being that pupils can ultimately do the maths without recourse to the representation.

3. Mathematical thinking

If taught ideas are to be understood deeply, they must not merely be passively received but worked on by the child. New concepts must be thought about, reasoned with, and discussed with others.

4. Fluency

Children need quick and efficient recall of facts and procedures, and the flexibility to move between different contexts and representations of mathematics.

5. Variation

This involves how the teacher represents the concept being taught, often in more than one way, to draw attention to critical aspects, and to develop deep and holistic understanding. It's also about sequencing of the episodes, activities and exercises used within a lesson and follow-up practice, paying attention to what is kept the same and what changes. This connects the mathematics and draws attention to mathematical relationships and structure.

“Primary schools are measured on SATs, but we have changed the focus from preparing pupils for tests, to developing a deeper understanding”

So, how has this helped children acquire a deep, long-term, secure and adaptable understanding of the subject at our Trust? Drawing on our journey over nearly seven years, these are my key takeaways for other schools:

AN INCLUSIVE, TAILORED APPROACH

Before teaching for mastery, we did a range of different things, including taking children outside of the classroom to work at a slower pace, but this only increased the attainment gap. Our approach was clearly not working for

all pupils. We want everyone to learn together, and so everyone now has access to the same learning, fluency, problem-solving and reasoning. This really helped lower attaining children feel part of the class, rather than being separate and working outside away from their peers. We have tailored these principles to the needs of our children.

REALISTIC TIMESCALES

Building from foundation up to Year 6 develops confidence and efficiency, and a by-product of that is results. This is not a year-long piece of work: it takes two, three or four years to see the impact. You have to bring staff with you, which means taking small steps – starting with fluency for knowledge, and developing teachers' understanding of effective use of language. This way it becomes less onerous and you can start seeing the benefit straight away.

CHANGING THINKING

Teaching for mastery should be seen as a continuum. In our Trust it is not happening perfectly every day in the classroom, but there has been real progression. Through the Cambridge Maths Hub, and Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunity Area, funded by the DfE, we have taken on a role to develop training in maths in other schools. In opportunity area schools, especially, it is about changing mindsets. Primary schools are obviously measured on SATs, but we have changed the focus from preparing pupils for tests, to developing a deeper understanding of maths.

ASK QUESTIONS, GIVE OWNERSHIP

I go into schools, listen to their approach to maths and ask what they are doing and how they are finding it; a mutually professional dialogue that is also a learning process for me. Support can



“This is not a year-long piece of work; it takes two, three or four years until you can see the impact”

include lesson design, or other areas with which staff need help. Heads and senior leaders then take this knowledge into CPD sessions; training is essential to making sure mastery is happening consistently across all age phases, and that it is continually maintained. Following on from this, leaders need to constantly monitor and support pupils. As I mentioned, it takes years to bring about change.

PROVIDE CPD TO KEEP STAFF ON THE JOURNEY

Looking at some schools, turnover of staff is a huge issue. We often find schools we supported a few years ago now have different teams in place, which can make it difficult to maintain forward momentum.

At CPET, former classroom teachers are now assistant heads / maths leads. The Trust does not have a high turnover of staff, which means we have consistency, and this is due in large part to the professional development opportunities on offer. I know lots

HOW TO IMPLEMENT MATHS MASTERY

- A whole-school strategy on teaching for mastery is essential, but you need to be realistic on timescales for delivery and impact.
- A change of mindset on the approaches to teaching maths can have a deeper impact on children than one that simply seeks to prepare them for national tests.
- An inclusive approach where every child has access to the same learning, fluency, problem-solving and reasoning, is key.
- Give ownership and hear colleagues' ideas. Don't be regimented, but at the same time do not dilute the mastery approach and ensure that staff have the support they need to take the learning forward themselves.
- Always remember that if the children are happy, if they are enjoying themselves, the learning comes.

of people who have come a long way – colleagues who now lead the training themselves.

INSTIL PASSION, MAKE LEARNING FUN

I have always had a passion for maths. I love to see children grow, develop and foster a love for the subject, and we have always sought to counter the national picture of 'can't do' maths. Before maths mastery, children did not have a deep understanding, or knowledge of the big ideas that underpin the subject. They were procedural mathematicians. This was impacting on GCSE results and beyond, because the understanding was not there. We want to create critical thinkers, rigorous learners, and to build deep understanding of concepts. Every school is judged by results, but there is a bigger picture to consider.



John Canavan is assistant headteacher and Year 6 teacher at Hatton Park Primary School, part of Cambridge Primary Education Trust

A PRIMARY UNIVERSITY

Sue-Ellen Lamb's school offers life-changing experiences to broaden pupils' horizons

Recently, we launched what we believe is a pioneering project at Race Leys Junior School, in Bedworth, to allow pupils to experience a taste of university life.

Griffin University, an initiative that is also a feature of other schools within the Griffin Schools Trust – a family of primaries and secondaries based in the Midlands and south-east of England – enables pupils to access the sort of rich and broad extracurricular experiences offered to much older learners at university.

Every Friday afternoon, Race Leys invites its pupils to attend seminars and activities, with a wide range of options available to them, including subjects as diverse as forensic science, pop art, and business and economics.

WIDENING HORIZONS

First and foremost, the atmosphere of excitement, innovation and challenge that underpins an experience like Griffin University allows children to broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations.

For some pupils, the allure of a topic such as forensic science might pique their interest, generating a thirst for knowledge or awakening a previously dormant excitement towards learning. By igniting children's innate curiosity and wonder, we can leave them with the exhilarating sense of just how much there is to discover about the world and the part they might play in these discoveries.

In broadening the curriculum in this way, children are permitted to think and learn more freely, with a greater emphasis on developing their unique interests. In doing so, pupils are inspired to take charge of their learning and interests, discover the joy of knowledge and culture, and spark future ambitions of entering higher education.

Widening the horizons of our pupils is one of the three pillars at the very heart of Race Leys Junior School's ethos. Indeed, integral to the culture of all of the schools with the Griffin Schools Trust is the value that we place on the interconnection between 'Wide Horizons', 'High Achievement' and 'Proud Traditions'.

In practice, this entails pupils and staff alike embracing and demonstrating genuine

enthusiasm for the broad range of opportunities that may fall outside of the traditional school curriculum – for instance, the Griffin Arts Festival, the Griffin Sports Festival, and the Griffin Science Symposium to name but three.

The importance of music, arts, and sports reflects our understanding that children have a wide range of aptitudes, talents, and interests. In prioritising these subjects, our pupils recognise that they belong to a school culture in which all are valued, and all skills are given the space and time to be nurtured.

“A rich extracurricular programme can promote children's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing”

EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMME

The benefits of a school committed to providing a high-quality extracurricular programme are far-reaching. In offering pupils an array of rich experiences, schools promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. In providing children with 'cultural capital', which can be described as essential cultural knowledge and reference points, professionals are ensuring that children are able to make connections and apply their learning to different topics.

For instance, children at the Griffin Trust schools perform in a National Shakespeare Festival. This early awareness and knowledge of Shakespeare is key cultural capital that prepares them for their next steps in education and helps them navigate the reference points embedded within their learning and their communities.

Our school's links with the Royal Opera House and the Royal Ballet further reflect a vision for celebrating a broad range of learning and activities and striving for excellence. Pupils take part in singing, acting and dancing



projects, and two gifted and talented children are selected for sponsorship to attend the local ballet school for three years. Subjects such as the performing arts have inherent value: many children experience profound delight when immersed in music, dance, and drama.

The benefits are even more wide-ranging than this, though. For example, a rich extracurricular programme can promote children's self-esteem and emotional

wellbeing and support them in forming and maintaining positive relationships with their peers.

Accessing Griffin University and a range of activities and festivals is life-changing for pupils. One of these school activities might represent their first ever experience of the theatre or science as a real-life discipline, or of art as a subject that has relevance for them personally. This is about opening doors for children and widening access to the very best of human art, science, and culture.

Furthermore, Griffin University and other similar ventures can connect with the broader community. For example, the delivered seminars might draw on the expertise and skills of parents, carers, and other members of the local community. Through this, pupils can better relate to others and work for the common good.

CAN DO ATTITUDE

In fostering a sense of being part of something ambitious and aspirational, pupils are more likely to respond positively to challenge and responsibility, to respond with a 'can do' attitude when opportunities are presented. In addition, taking part in sports, music, and drama and engaging with new subject areas can help pupils navigate risk and develop resilience when faced with change and adversity.

Opportunities for movement allow children to develop physical skills and encourage them to value a healthy lifestyle. Everyone takes on some responsibility for the physical and mental health of themselves and others. Links with the local community also encourage pupils to value their achievements in the context of life and society beyond school.

For instance, involvement in charity work supports future community engagement; delight in music, arts, and sports helps pupils self-direct and appreciate their leisure time; communication with local businesses and organisations can allow children to picture themselves in future employment. These things work together to raise children's ambitions and broaden their perspective on life.

In offering an extensive and exciting extracurricular programme, Race Leys Junior School seeks to build on pupils' strengths and experiences. Pupils Voice allows children to evaluate, self-reflect and to shape aspects of their learning and their curriculum. This equips them with essential skills for the real world, such as the ability to think critically, work as part of a team, and communicate through a range of mediums.

The richness of such a curriculum thus contributes to pupils' sense of identity. Staff, pupils, parents and carers are all working

HONOURS LIST

How you could benefit from launching a university at your school

- 1 Setting up seminars at your school will broaden students' horizons, raise their future aspirations and introduce new subjects that may awaken a love of learning.
- 2 You will be increasing children's cultural capital – providing valuable points of reference that will allow them to make connections between different topics.
- 3 Extra-curricular activities, for example music, art and drama, can promote children's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing, helping them to form and maintain positive relationships.
- 4 It supports a 'can-do' attitude as children learn to be ambitious and respond positively to challenge and responsibility.
- 5 It celebrates achievement in areas that might fall outside of the traditional school curriculum, demonstrating to children that they are part of a culture in which all skills are valued.

collaboratively to appreciate the highest achievements in art, science and technology.

While this is a school-wide undertaking, the personal responses of individual pupils are also significant. By experiencing rich and varied extracurricular opportunities, children are supported to be critical-minded, creative, problem-solving, and community-spirited.

Griffin University provides unique opportunities for pupils to be innovative, leaders, and creative. These qualities are of the uppermost value to their future selves. Therefore, we believe that offering our pupils an early university experience will enrich all aspects of their future lives, as individuals, as professionals and as citizens.

An ever evolving, inclusive and diverse curriculum is an exciting journey for Race Leys Junior School. We eagerly await the future achievements of pupils attending a Griffin University!



Sue-Ellen Lamb, is head of school, Race Leys Junior School, Warwickshire.



ASK THE EXPERT

Support for safeguarders

Vikkey Chaffe explains the origins of The Safeguarding Community and the difference it hopes to make with its new platform for safeguarding professionals

What is your background and why have you created this community?

I started my teaching career 15 years ago and swiftly became an Advanced Skills Teacher and then a Safeguarding Lead. Five years ago I founded the network Primary School Leaders, due to the need for leaders of every level to connect, regardless of their location.

There was also a necessity for a place where anyone involved in safeguarding could reach out for support and ask questions, regardless of their sector. Thus, The Safeguarding Community was created!

Why is there such an urgent need for our 'safeguarders' to connect with each other?

Working in safeguarding can involve harrowing cases, demanding situations, challenging conversations and upsetting circumstances, which many Safeguarding Leads must deal with alone. Sometimes you just need to talk to someone, or seek some advice regarding a particular situation you haven't experienced before. All of us sometimes need a safe space where we can support each other, learn from each other, share our experiences and talk to people dealing with the same situations.

What does this 'safe space' looklike?

At The Safeguarding Company we have invested in creating a bespoke platform to host our community, rather than rely on an existing social media platform. Doing this will ensure that our community remains secure, and allow us to better meet the needs of our safeguarders. We will look to monitor the community closely, and set out ground rules so that all members feel supported and respected.



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Vikkey Chaffe
JOB TITLE:
Head of Community Relations
BEST PART OF MY JOB:
I love supporting safeguarding leads, to enable them to safeguard children and young people

What are some of the Safeguarding Community's key features?

We will have three different rooms for different needs. In the 'Staff Room', everyone can ask broad questions and share resources, just as they would in their real-world equivalent. Our 'International Room' is for sharing any questions that specifically relate to international safeguarding queries. Finally, there's our 'Safe Room' – all posts made in this room will be marked anonymous, for discussions around more delicate issues. Members can ask anything in here that would otherwise be considered too sensitive and confidential for the 'Staff Room'.

Will members need to pay to join?

We care about the people who keep our children and young people safe. To reflect that, the community is free and open to join for everyone involved in safeguarding. We truly believe that giving safeguarding specialists a safe place in which to communicate will make a significant difference to their wellbeing. We will also use the platform to share legislation and guidance from governing bodies, while also hosting expert-led Q&A sessions. There will be free resources and blogs, but most important of all – the ability to connect with others involved in safeguarding.

ASK ME ABOUT

SAFEGUARDING SOLUTIONS - We provide a range of safeguarding solutions to help you with recording and managing safeguarding concerns, safer recruitment, staff allegations and training.

JOINING THE COMMUNITY - Join the community and connect with others involved in safeguarding who understand how challenging the role can be.

W: thesafeguardingcompany.com **T:** 0330 6600 757

E: info@thesafeguardingcompany.com

Eat your veg!

Maya Thomas discusses ways of instilling good food habits early on

We all know about the importance of a healthy diet for good learning and development, but feeding young children can be a tough call for a caterer.

Some children will eat just pasta and cheese if you let them, at every single meal. It is not unusual to hear the cries of "I don't like it!" before the plate has even been placed in front of them.

At this critical age of development, life-long habits can be formed around developing a healthy relationship with food. What we eat not only provides the building blocks of physical and mental wellbeing but how we later go on to contribute to society.

The love of beige and bland food that seems to take hold of young children can be moved away from, with the introduction of colours, flavours and textures.

KEEP IT SEASONAL AND SIMPLE

Good food should never be exclusive. It doesn't need to be gourmet, expensive or trendy. Simplicity is key, and the ingredient is the main event.

Eating out of season has led to children believing that eating strawberries, peaches and mangoes all year round is perfectly normal. This makes it less likely that they'll want to try something different and takes away some of the magic around having some foods for a finite amount of time during the year.

For the winter/spring 2022 term, I've been introducing rhubarb on a weekly basis, and the pink stalks are a talking point when on display – and even more so when stewed or roasted with warming spices to be had with the morning porridge or put into a healthy baked snack.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IS KEY

Give the children some autonomy over what they eat by giving them foods that require choice and encourage active engagement with what they're eating, whilst not overwhelming the child.

Familiarity also builds confidence. Oats are a key staple throughout the year – adapted in terms of porridge, granola or bircher muesli. They're a great support for the nervous system, packed full of B vitamins, and are low GI helping to avoid blood sugar spikes and crashes.

LESS IS MORE

Small portions are the way to go when introducing something new. The idea is to encourage the children to try the new food once or twice. A smaller amount is less intimidating and also less wasteful if rejected. There is always more if they want it.

Choice is important. When faced with additional vegetables on their plates pupils often won't eat them. However, if a bowl of vegetables is passed around, they will.

HERBS & SPICES

We often forget that these plants are foods in and of themselves. When we use them "to add flavour" rather than as an actual ingredient, we overlook their potential.

Not only are they economical to grow (requiring little space and attendance once established) or purchase, they can also be used throughout the year – fresh or dried. We like to place a sprig or two of herbs on the tables at mealtimes, as they also speak to all our senses – the touch, sight, smell and taste of them are utterly engaging.

They're also a fantastic way to start broadening the flavour palette without over-complicating the food. It's also worth mentioning to pupils that they have health-giving qualities, with most aromatic herbs possessing antiviral and antibacterial properties as well as being loaded with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.

Parsley for instance, contains more iron than spinach, whilst rosemary is known to improve memory and concentration; bay aids digestion, and a mild spice such as cinnamon helps to control blood sugar whilst adding natural sweetness, and ginger acts as a prebiotic in the gut – feeding good bacteria.

TALK ABOUT SOIL

Consider whether you can grow some of the ingredients used in your school lunches, such as rhubarb. Making those simple connections between what comes out of the ground and what goes into their bellies is not only fundamental to children's understanding of the food process, but also their health.



Maya Thomas is a herbologist and chef at Paint Pots The Grove, Notting Hill, paint-pots.co.uk

"Making simple connections between what comes out of the ground and what goes into their bellies is fundamental to children's understanding of food"



TAKING A RESTORATIVE APPROACH

Katrina Brown shares strategies for helping children with social and emotional challenges

Primaries schools work hard to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, helping them realise their potential whilst minimising the wider impact of behaviours that can result from disordered social and emotional development.

Informed, responsive and flexible approaches are more essential now than ever. Schools need to be a place of security and nurture, and offer an environment where children can express their emotions in a regulated manner.

Strong and responsive relationships between school adults and children – underpinned by a predictable structure to the day, and tasks that address gaps in development and learning – can ultimately sponsor success.

RELATIONSHIPS

Schools adopting a trauma-informed approach will deploy adults who understand the importance of relationships in supporting children to settle emotionally and physically.

Behaviour needs to be understood as a means of communication and responses calm, measured and consistent. Adults who come into contact with a pupil need to know the child and adhere to an agreed approach. The goal is to ensure stress is minimised but also that adults are acutely aware of any warning signs and what intervention is necessary to get back on track.

When adults have a shared understanding that the behaviour of the child is an expression of a deeper need, they are more likely to be able to support the child to make a sustainable behavioural change which relies on self-regulation.

Adults deployed to work with pupils with social and emotional regulation difficulties should be able to focus on 'the now' and move on quickly from their own disappointments, remain patient, consistent, calm and flexible and have the confidence to employ strategies to de-escalate. Whether

children spend all or part of their day in a specialist provision or are mainly in class, adults need to work hard to build attachments and foster trust.

Language used with children with PSED difficulties needs to be clear. Instructions should be delivered in calm, simple language so that the core message is not missed. If the next task could potentially trigger a negative response, the adult needs to manage the expectations, e.g. "We can enjoy this game even if we don't come first". It is expected that children will make their own choices but sometimes circumstances mean the adult needs to instruct, e.g. rather than "Would you like to tidy up now" say "Time to tidy up".

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

It is important to recognise the behaviours as they occur to reinforce what is expected. Staff should agree what the principal pro-social behaviours are and consistently encourage and acknowledge them. The recognition system can be recorded or verbal but should become so familiar to the child that they use the language independently, can explain what it means and recognise themselves when they are doing it. Throughout the day, adults should point out the following to the child so that s/he grows to believe that:

- I think before I act
- I can have a go
- I accept my mistakes

"Simply put, the approach leads to honest conversations that don't dwell on the punitive outcome"



- I am considerate of others
- I bounce back
- I am positive
- I listen
- I keep my problems small
- I accept challenges
- I do not give up
- I do the right thing
- I am an independent learner

Behaviour management for pupils with PSED needs will often be individualised with risk thoughtfully planned for and recorded as part of a one-page profile or an explicit risk reduction plan. Rules are in place to safeguard and to ensure that children can be taught well enough to learn and move on from their starting points.

Adults can support pupils to get back on track with gentle but firm reminders delivered in a neutral tone to put the appropriate course back in the child's mind. They need to be vigilant and be aware of where pupils are on their personal scale of regulated behaviours. To stymie inappropriate



behaviours, low key responses and descriptions of reality delivered by an adult to pupils off task and on the cusp of accelerating behaviours could be any of the following:

- Tactical ignoring. Sit it out and withdraw interaction and reaction.
- Swoop in and out. Give a quick instruction and leave because the expectation is that everything will be in order again from that point.
- Describe what has been successful prior to this moment. "Elizabeth, I really liked the way you re-read the sentence in order to correct your mistake earlier on. Maybe that will work here too? Give it a go."
- Describe the reality. For example, "Elizabeth, you are shouting."
- Describe what the positive behaviour looks like. "Elizabeth, we put our hands up and wait to be asked. Thank you."
- Reminder of the expectation. "Elizabeth, the expectation is that we walk to the line. Thank you."

- Bring the task to close but on the adult's terms. "Elizabeth, just finish those two questions because we need to go outside for our mile a day. Thanks."

Children need to be reminded to keep their problems small, but mistakes do occur and when they do, clear, logical consequences should follow. Thought should be given to what makes sense to the child and how it relates to the behaviour because the desired outcome is for the behaviour to be altered in the long term.

THE RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION

A restorative approach separates the child from the behaviour but supports an understanding of the child's own culpability and the harm that has been caused to others. Adults ensure when discussing an incident the child knows they are listened to. When restorative conversations become part of the fabric of provision, children

STRUCTURING A RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION

The restorative conversation will be scaffolded by questions to an end goal of how reparation can be made. Questions could be asked as follows:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have your thoughts been since the incident?
- Who do you think has been affected by your actions?
- In what way were they affected?
- What do you do now to make things right?

understand that mistakes are expected but with shared inspection the situation can be resolved calmly.

Simply put, the approach leads to honest conversations that don't dwell on the punitive outcome. There may ultimately be a consequence but because the process helps the child to accept their own culpability in a structured way, a consequence becomes logical. Adults plan the approach with questions/scripts to elicit an understanding of the incident and the child's place in it. Careful listening, an open mind and empathy support a positive interaction.

Finally, for children with short attention spans, social stories can be used to improve understanding by presenting a short narrative in a concrete way in less time. Cartoon strips can be used to provide a visual map through the incident and prompt answers. For young children, drawing very simple pictures on a white board to make the sequence clear with space for the adult to draw or write an alternative course of behaviour will suffice.



Katrina Brown is SENDCo at Histon and Impington Park Primary School, and Leader of GROW at Cambridge Primary Education Trust

TEACHING SELF-REGULATION

Pupils need to be allowed to make mistakes if they are to develop and learn effectively, says **Sue Cowley**

When you consider all the things you would like pupils to learn while they are in your school, it is probably not just subject knowledge and skills that come to mind; we also want to support children to develop in the widest sense while they are in our care.

Some key attributes we might want to help children develop would include empathy, resilience, flexible thinking, the ability to focus and to be active lifelong learners. All these varied attributes form part of a set of behavioural skills which are collectively referred to as 'self-regulation'.

Self-regulation contributes to children becoming successful in all subject areas, because these skills help pupils regulate their emotions, manage their own behaviour and think about how to learn.

Research consistently demonstrates that self-regulation plays a vital role in children's long-term outcomes, with well evidenced links to academic performance, benefits to health, social cohesion, and financial security.

WHAT IS SELF-REGULATION?

Self-regulation describes a set of executive (or brain) functions, which support us in being aware of and controlling our own behaviours. The executive functions involved include working memory, mental flexibility and impulse control. These work together to act as a kind of 'air traffic control system' for our behaviours. They help us to think about, plan for and manage the diverse situations in which we find ourselves.

The Department for Education has included new early learning goals in this area in the revised EYFS Statutory Framework. The DfE focus is on aspects of self-regulation such as following instructions, and attentional control. However, there are a surprisingly wide-ranging set of skills that actually comprise the overall concept.

Some self-regulation skills are emotional ones – being able to calm ourselves, cope with strong feelings and empathise with other people. Some are cognitive – being able to direct our attention, work out how to approach tasks, maintain attention, deal with challenge and handle failure. And then there are behavioural skills such as being able to manage our impulses and understand how to avoid/resolve conflicts.

“Children need to believe that they can be ‘active agents’ within their homes, schools and communities, rather than feeling helpless to effect change”

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Self-regulation develops over the course of childhood and indeed into later life – most of us can probably think of examples of times when we are unable to self-regulate, even as adults. Newborn babies do not regulate their impulses at all – the urge to cry when they are hungry or in pain is a survival mechanism. As children get older, most of them gradually learn the impulse control required to be successful in education and to fit into society.

A key factor for the early development of self-regulation is secure attachments to caregivers. The caregivers need to be responsive to the child's needs, and to consistently send the message that they have 'unconditional positive regard' for the child. In other words, the caregiver's love will not be withheld or given dependent on the child's behaviour – they will love the child no matter what.

Clearly, this link with secure attachments means that you might see weaker self-regulation skills in looked after children, and in those who have had adverse childhood experiences. You might have noticed how some children really struggle with transitions, for instance having difficulty

separating from parents or carers at morning drop-off time in Reception. The role of the key person in the EYFS is vital here, alongside a focus on



nurture, mental health and wellbeing, and the prime area of personal, social and emotional development.

FROM CO-REGULATION TO SELF-REGULATION

The younger children are, the more they need support in learning self-regulation skills. This is why co-regulation is so important, particularly for the youngest children (although this technique can and should be used for all children in the primary age group).

Co-regulation is the process of an adult offering coaxing, comfort, motivation, physical and emotional scaffolds and so on. For instance, it might be about talking gently to a child if they are becoming upset, using your words and tone to help them calm down. It could be about giving a child physical support to help them handle an activity they find challenging, such as climbing or balancing.

SELF-REGULATION, AGENCY AND METACOGNITION

One of the key factors supporting the development of self-regulation is for children to be given agency to make choices and to take decisions. Children need to feel like they can have a direct impact on their world, by choosing how they respond and react in different scenarios. For self-regulation to develop fully, children need to believe that they can be 'active agents' within their homes, schools and communities, rather than feeling helpless to effect change.

The development of agency can be incorporated in various ways into your daily school life, such as giving children a chance to make choices during the morning routine. For instance, you could develop agency by giving children a choice of starter activities, a chance to make a decision about how some school funds are spent, volunteer tasks to choose and complete, and so on.

We tend to think of 'disadvantaged homes' as those where children do not get sufficient parental input. However, where parents or carers have a habit of over helping their child, and trying to shield them from all upsets or difficulties, this can also lead to poor regulation. You could encourage parents and carers to support your work on developing self-regulation skills by holding a workshop to talk about how it develops.

SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR POLICIES

One of the key features of self-regulation is the ability to manage oneself – the belief that we have a choice in how we behave and how we react to what happens to us. The clue is in the word 'self'. We cannot force children to self-regulate; we can however support the development of associated skills.

This means that it is worth reflecting on your approaches to behaviour, and whether they lean heavily on external systems to encourage compliance. Where the system is meant to 'do the work', rather than the child, this can be counter-productive in supporting the development of self-regulation.

For instance, research has shown that the overuse of rewards, or of public systems of approval and disapproval, such as weather or star charts, can be counterproductive for intrinsic motivation. Public systems can also cause a feeling of shame, which in turn damages the feeling of 'unconditional positive regard' that is so central to developing self-regulation.

Ideally, for self-regulation to develop fully, the child needs to be given opportunities to gradually learn to control their impulses, rather than moving straight to a consequence every time. We need to become comfortable with children 'failing' at behaviour, and then working to improve, just as we encourage children to see failing as a 'first attempt in learning' in subject-based work.

Children have it within their power to regulate their impulses. Just like any skill, it will take them time to master. But once they have got the hang of it, they will be set for success in the future.



Sue Cowley is a teacher, author, teacher trainer and presenter, who has taught in all phases of education:

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FROM PHONICS TO BOOKWORMS

Don't be afraid to experiment with approaches that instil a love of reading, says **Gemma Smith**

As a one-form entry church school, I was ecstatic when we received a 'Good' Ofsted rating at the end of 2021, after an incredibly challenging period. It was a wonderful way to start the new year.

Among the positive aspects the inspectors picked up on is the way we 'prioritise' reading. A comment that particularly filled me with pride was "*pupils learn not just to understand what they read, but also to love books.*"

Engaging children in reading and inspiring them to love books is something on which the school has consistently worked hard. It has taken us a lot of research, experimentation and dedication to find an approach that produces fluent and confident readers. However, I believe it's the culture of our school and the passion of our staff that has inspired a true love of reading amongst our pupils.

ESTABLISHING A STRONG BASE FOR READING

At Orsett, we follow an established scheme of work based on letters and sounds, which

has been adapted over time and is regularly reviewed to best fit the needs of the children.

We have invested in resources such as Bug Club; an online reading platform where parents access support to engage their child in reading from home. We also produce our own short videos to introduce the sounds the children are learning.

Meanwhile, Phonics Boot Camp challenges children to complete short and snappy phonics-related physical activities, similar to a Joe Wicks HITT session. This kinaesthetic approach allows pupils to apply the skills they've learned, gets them active and enables staff time to work with individual children who may have struggled with a concept that week.

BEING FLEXIBLE

As educators, we appreciate the need to be flexible, and phonics is no exception. If it's not working for a specific group of children, we change our approach to best suit them. For instance, we decided to spend longer on the teaching of split digraphs as we found the suggested one week for this wasn't leading to effective retention. Simply tweaking this to two weeks on these trickier sounds has led to better retention and application.

Our flexibility in approach is fundamental with our lowest 20% and SEN children, who are always at the forefront of our minds. Through regular pupil progress checks and weekly meetings with the SENCO, we ensure the robust interventions we have in place are working for each

individual child. For some, extra daily reading is enough but for others we delve into nationally recognised interventions, precision teaching and sight recognition.

Our SENCO always encourages staff to identify the barriers that obstruct fluency, whether that be a speech and language need or an issue with confidence and self-esteem. Whatever the need, we ensure we provide a solution as best as we can.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Bridging the gap between phonics and reading fluently is a skill that is built up over Key Stage 1 and Early Years and into Key Stage 2 for some children. I'm often asked if there are any books that do this particularly well and my answer is always yes – all books!

All reading materials enable phonics to be developed. However, choosing the right reading scheme, alongside clear teaching and learning, is paramount in supporting all children.

In KS2, we highlight segmenting syllables to aid fluency, and ensure that reading aloud in a supportive environment is practised during guided reading. We actively encourage our children when faced with unknown words to use their phonic skills and take a 'learning risk'.

Phonics books aren't always the most inspiring – there are only so many words you can make with s,a,t,p,i,n, so we ensure that they have a 'reading for pleasure' book too. If a book is challenging, we encourage them to persevere, which is one of our school Christian values.

"We actively encourage our children when faced with unknown words to use their phonic skills and take a 'learning risk'"



BUILDING A LOVE FOR READING

I have found, over the many years I have been a teacher and a senior leader, that developing a strong reading ethos needs staff to regularly revisit the question, 'How do we develop a love for reading at our school?' There is no magic formula but I believe it's a careful balance of commitment, time and a strong desire to want to embed an effective reading practice.

All of our staff model a love for reading and regularly discuss the books we have read with the children. If we show that we are avid readers, we are providing a reason for children to do the same.

As a head, I try to ensure that I read with children as often as possible. I deliver two reading worships a week where I read high-quality texts that inspire a love of reading – one to each key stage. When the reading chair is at the front of worship, they know this is the case and it's delightful to see children's faces light up.

Our library is a testament to our school-wide love of reading. It is a welcoming and colourful safe haven, and home to a full-size Doctor Who TARDIS, which the children love. We have library prefects who ensure the space stays clean, tidy and is respected. This is all overseen

by my mum, a retired librarian, who makes sure everything runs smoothly.



WHAT TO CONSIDER

- **Utilise a diverse range of books for learning phonics – Phonics books have their place, but any book can be utilised for phonics practice if it is a book your pupils are interested in.**
- **Encourage staff to consistently talk about books and their own love of reading – Pupils need to see that their role models are reading regularly and enjoying a variety of genres.**
- **Ensure they always have a book of their own choosing – Personal choice is crucial when it comes to encouraging children to become engaged readers.**
- **Create a library or space that is colourful, imaginative and comfortable – Creating a space where the children want to visit, explore and hopefully stay and read is key.**
- **Make story time part of the school schedule – Having a range of stories read by a variety of people will naturally instil reading as an everyday activity.**
- **Read as often as possible – Use reading in all parts of the curriculum, encourage it at home and school. The more they read the more pupils should love it!**

BEDTIME STORIES

We are looking forward to reintroducing bedtime story nights, where the entire school stays for a bedtime story. During a particularly challenging COVID outbreak, children and staff all came to school in pyjamas and we snuggled down in our bubbles with our favourite stories – giving the message that a good book can bring hope, escapism, and, at times, familiarity.

Ultimately, we believe the key to creating confident and successful young readers is to encourage them to make choices that hone their skills and help them discover what and why they love to read. It is from here they will develop a real love of books.



Gemma Smith is headteacher at Orsett C of E Primary School, Essex

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With no two school days the same, unexpected scenarios can crop up any time. You're only human, and sometimes questions come your way that you can't answer. You need to be confident you can get the guidance you need, whenever you need it. That's where The Key for School Leaders can help. "Successful school leadership is not about knowing all the answers," says Peter Kent, headteacher at Lawrence Sheriff School. "It is about knowing where to look for the answers – and in this The Key is invaluable."



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With The Key for School Leaders' support, over 120,000 SLT members are at the top of their game. "The Key for School Leaders is our go-to resource with any question. It's full of brilliant advice. Experts are on hand if what you need isn't there already. It saves you time, money and worry. We'd highly recommend it," says Ben Levinson OBE, headteacher at Kensington Primary School (2020 Primary School of the Year).

KEY POINTS

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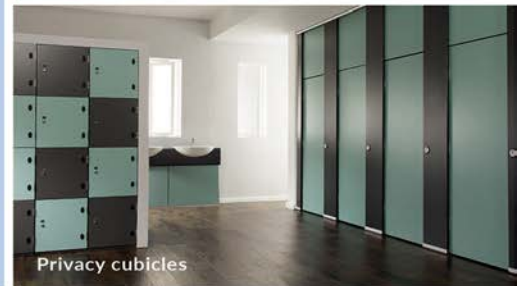
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TACKLING DIGITAL POVERTY

Funding has been announced for a new scheme to equip teachers with devices

The Digital Poverty Alliance, Intel and the Learning Foundation, supported by Barclays, have launched new funding to tackle digital poverty in schools across the UK.

The campaign, Tech4Teachers, will provide 550 devices to teachers who lack adequate online access, to enable them to better support more than 20,000 school children in the most disadvantaged communities who are eligible for pupil premium funding.

In addition, a new collaboration room for teaching professionals, sponsored by Intel and Barclays, will be created on the Digital Poverty Alliance community hub. It will serve as an area for participating teachers to share best practices, ask questions, and seek guidance.

It follows the success of the initial phase of the Tech4teachers programme funded by Currys in 2021, which provided 1,000 laptops for teachers and teaching assistants at schools across the UK.

According to the Alliance, a quarter of vulnerable children in the UK do not have access to a suitable device for learning and 70% of households earning than £17.5k a year only have foundation digital skills. The organisation said that digital exclusion was continuing to affect millions of children and was "a top issue in tackling poverty".

Other studies have also shown worrying findings about the impact of digital poverty on education. A study by Oxford University Press,

"How can we support children to learn how to use devices and develop digital skills if their teachers don't have suitable technology to teach them?"

published late last year, found that nearly seven in 10 teachers believed the biggest barrier to learning was poor digital access and 56% said teachers and learners did not have the skills to make digital learning a success. Half of teachers believe that a lack of parental understanding of digital tools and platforms limited the effectiveness of remote learning.

The DPA has a mission to end digital poverty for all by 2030, and believes that not enough progress was being made to bridge the digital divide. Despite campaigns, such as the government's distribution of 1.3 million laptops to disadvantaged school children during the



pandemic, at least one in 10 families continues to rely on a small hand-held device such as a mobile phone, for access to the internet.

Under the latest scheme, Intel Corporation will provide funding as part of their RISE initiatives to create a more Responsible, Inclusive, and Sustainable world, Enabled through technology. RISE focuses on Intel partnering with organisations worldwide to respond to geographically unique problems as well as global challenges.

The Barclays funding will come from Barclays 100x100 UK COVID-19 Community Relief Fund. This follows the success of the initial phase of the Tech4Teachers programme funded by Currys in 2021, which provided 1,000 laptops for teachers and teaching assistants at schools across the UK.

After the project, the Learning Foundation will evaluate the impact and create a white paper with policy recommendations for the Department for Education.

Paul Finnis, CEO of the Digital Poverty Alliance and the Learning Foundation, said: "A Digital Poverty Alliance survey of 700 teachers in 200 schools across the UK in 2021 revealed that during the pandemic, 47% of teachers did not have adequate technology to be able to teach effectively. Adequately equipping teachers with suitable digital devices is vital in supporting pupils and ultimately building the necessary digital skills to tackle digital poverty."

"Teachers must not be forgotten by the Government or industry in efforts to 'level-up'. How can we support children to learn how to use devices and develop digital skills if their teachers don't have suitable technology to teach them?"

Nigel Higgins, Barclays Chairman, added: "Our charity partners have been working tirelessly to support vulnerable communities across the UK through what has been a difficult year. These charities have championed a range of causes, including tackling homelessness, food poverty or loneliness, and we are immensely grateful for their work in the communities in which we live and work."

"While we are starting to emerge from the most acute stage of the crisis, the effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt by many. Our decision to extend our 100x100 programme for a second time reflects this, allowing Barclays to support 250 UK grassroots charities in their crucial work in our local communities."

For further information - see digitalpovertyalliance.org.



DRIVING CHANGE IN COMMUNITIES

James Murray explains how Ormiston Trust is offering up to £5,000 grants to support schools in England

Ormiston Trust is supporting students, schools and local communities across England by offering grants of up to £5,000 to fund sustainable social action projects and to embed sustainable youth programmes into their curriculum.

The Trust is offering the funding to support schools in creating opportunities for young people to drive change in their communities. The grants form part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the National Lottery Community Fund's #iwill fund, which supports young people in accessing high-quality social action opportunities.

There are four main funding areas within the programme, that schools can apply for: Environment and Climate Justice; Wellbeing and Mental Health; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Community-based Issues.

Applications for the #WeWill Social Action Fund, which are due by April 18th 2022, are open to all primary and secondary schools based in England. Successful applicants will be offered a supportive social action toolkit filled with resources, curriculum guides and templates to be used throughout the span of the programme.

Social action is central to our Trust's ethos, and we are committed to making a difference in communities across the country. We are proud to be able to play a part in providing vital opportunities that will inspire young people to take action to improve the lives of those around them.

Providing schools with this vital funding

supports the Trust's aim of creating a future where all children and young people can lead fulfilling lives. A core part of the Trust's vision is a belief that young people can and should be at the centre of meaningful change and at the heart of social impact within their communities at large.

The Trust's fund, which has been named the #WeWill Social Action Grants Fund, supports this vision by funding projects that will have a meaningful social impact on an individual, school, local, national and/or international level. The programmes are all co-created by young people in order to help inspire them to want to make a difference, while also allowing them to develop key leadership and team-building skills.

This new financial source builds upon the success of Ormiston Trust's social action programmes with its chief partners, Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT), Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA), Gateway Learning Community (GLC) and charity Ormiston Families (OF). All of these partners will be embarking on exciting new social action projects in the coming months.



James Murray is CEO of Ormiston Trust. Anyone interested in applying should contact the Trust's Grant

Officers, Gabriella Ribeiro and Philippa Rottger-Morgan, at GabriellaRibeiro@ormistontrust.co.uk and phillipmorgan@ormistontrust.co.uk.

Millennial hangovers

Aging equipment needs careful financial planning to replace, says **Anthony David**

From a financial point of view, the last few years could not have been more challenging. For many, the two lock-down periods hammered home the reliance schools were beginning to have on self-generated income simply to stay afloat.

This has led to an argument suggesting that schools were inadvertently supporting the government's position that grant-based investment was sufficient. What has been initially a business strategy to create surplus had become essential and the hole it has left has exposed budgets.

However, this year things are different. While the government has not come anywhere close to realising the projected investment to support our lockdown generation (the conservative investment was suggested by Sir Kevan Collins to be no less than £15 billion) it has kept to their manifesto agreement for investment.

For a typical primary school that equates to around £75,000 and a typical secondary school closer to £250,000. These are significant amounts but not enough to spark an educational renaissance when salary increases, fuel increases and changes to national insurance are taken into account.

Schools have begun to see a return to pre-pandemic self-generated income. All of this is important when considering your day-to-day duty in maintaining your school.

USING REVENUE GRANT

Your revenue grant is not the one to use for replacing roofs or refurbishing whole classrooms. That is a capital grant purchase

and typically managed by either your local authority, diocese or MAT. That said, there are a number of items that do fall into the revenue grant that help you to maintain your site.

A classic example of this is redecoration costs. Typically, you will have a rolling maintenance programme of decoration across your site, which allows you to maintain rooms for as long as possible before they require more costly intervention. However, the last couple of decades have seen other high cost items enter site maintenance grants – typically, kitchen equipment and interactive whiteboards.

AGING MILLENNIAL INVESTMENT

In the early 2000s, many schools received new kitchens in order to meet the goals of hot food cooked on site. It was an extraordinarily ambitious project that gifted many small schools a much needed resource.

Unfortunately, this equipment is now aging and beginning to fail. For small schools particularly, this equipment is exponentially more expensive than larger sites and setting aside £2500 for a potential new fridge or freezer is a high cost.

Equally, IT costs may well be looming. In the first decade of this century all schools invested in projector interactive whiteboards (IWBs) and the likelihood is that they will be beginning to fail. Usually, it is either the bulb or lens that goes first. The temptation is to replace them, which is a cost in itself, and does little to change the projection power. The only way to do that is to change from projector boards to large, touch sensitive screens. These IWBs offer LED sharp pictures with the same brightness (lumens) as your own flat-screen TV.

Ironically, small schools will probably find it faster to replace these than larger primaries. Economies of scale only go so far – if you buy 14 boards in one year it is going to cost regardless of any deal you have negotiated. Depending on what your finance budget states, it is likely that costs over £10,000 are considered capital and therefore beyond the reach of your revenue budget. This complicates things but it is likely that many schools are facing the challenge of how to update equipment within budget.

Unfortunately these things matter. When parents visit your site they will want to see a clear, well-kept building that clearly has the latest technology at its heart. If kitchens are unable to operate this can send messages – children, much like armies, march on their stomachs. All of these require planning and ideally a school will set aside a budget to build a surplus for these rainy day events. The challenge is that most schools have had to depend on these surpluses over the last two years to maintain operational functions.

While this year will see a welcome boost, there remain some big costs that will come out of this increase to significantly impact the fictional increase that is being suggested by politicians.



Anthony David is executive headteacher of St Paul's CE Primary School and Monken Hadley CE Primary School.

Are pupils being left in the dark?

Graeme Shaw looks at the impact of good – and bad – lighting on teaching and learning

P rimary students spend over 7,000 hours at school throughout KS1 and KS2, most of which is in a single classroom designed before the development of dynamic lighting and digital technologies such as smart boards and tablets.

Teachers often try to improvise with lighting by using coloured filters over fluorescent lighting to try to create a better working environment, but good lighting remains a challenge, not least because budgets are tight and schools often make do as best as they can.

But poor light can cause all sorts of health problems for staff and pupils including headaches, eyestrain and fatigue, so it is an important issue. Simple changes in how we light our classrooms can bring significant benefits beyond the simple energy savings needed to address the energy crisis.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Education is the second-largest element of public service spending in the UK (behind health), but it still only represents 4.5% of national income. That's in comparison to Denmark which spends 7.3% of GDP, Sweden at 7.1%, and Norway at 6.9%. A relatively small amount of that goes on buildings and even less on lighting.

The government knows this needs to be addressed: the prime minister announced the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) in June 2020, which is set to deliver over 500 rebuilds and refurbishments and provide "modern, purpose-built schools designed for 21st-century learning" over the next decade. Does it go far enough? Probably not.

With squeezes on public spending, it's not surprising that the government's focus is on saving money, which LED lighting, through energy reduction, certainly delivers. However, this has led to a focus on the 'hard environment', achieving ultraefficient spaces and meeting minimum standards of lighting, while achieving the maximum energy savings.

MINIMUM STANDARDS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Classrooms are currently designed to provide a uniform distribution of light. In the absence of natural light, or insufficient natural light, a minimum illuminance of 300 lux (0.6 uniformity, UGR19 and Ra 80) is widely regarded as suitable for general tasks – designed to fulfil the requirements of BS EN 12464-1.

The simple lighting regulation standards are now woefully out of date, define only the minimum task area illuminance levels, and therefore, the minimum amount of light required by law – which is still very low.

Neither classrooms, nor the lighting within, are currently being designed for the rapidly changing activities associated with the different approaches used in teaching. Primary pupils and teachers tend to work in one classroom only, which has to accommodate activities as diverse as reading, writing and art.

“Children should not have to adapt to the environment, the environment should adapt to the child”





BALANCING LEARNING AND COMFORT

If a classroom is well-lit, students will feel more relaxed, motivated to learn and won't feel as tired. This is determined by the intensity of the light in the room, where it's coming from, what colour it is and the length of time pupils remain in that environment.

In a well-lit classroom, with individual control of environmental factors, students are found to be more relaxed, not as sleepy, and more motivated to learn.

Lighting merely to meet a minimum standard is not enough. Not when we know that it has a direct influence on students' learning performance.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Studies have shown that the impact of building design – especially light, temperature and air quality – have a significant impact on pupils' learning outcomes. We know that children's eyes let in more light than adults', are more permeable to both ultraviolet and blue light, and are more sensitive to glare.

Children have higher sensitivity to light because they have smaller pupils and less melatonin suppression than adults, affecting their sleep/wake cycles and their 24-hour internal clock or circadian rhythm.

Cases of short-sightedness have more than doubled in the past 50 years and now affect one in six children in the UK, by the age of 15. More research is needed on why we've seen such a significant increase, though it is widely

thought to be the environment; children spending more time indoors, on screens and reading (mainly black writing on a white background) and not getting enough daylight.

Studies show that exposure to blue-rich light, especially during morning sessions, increases academic performance, concentration and academic progress. Warm lighting can reduce aggression and positively affect social behaviour. Meanwhile, dimmed room lighting creates a calm and private space. This ambience supports reading aloud sessions, prayers and mindfulness breaks. Violet to azure – which is similar to natural light – reduces eye strain and works with our natural 24-hour clock.

One study found that students in well-lit classrooms with more daylight and bigger windows progressed approximately 20% faster in maths and reading. There is also thought to be a correlation between absenteeism and lighting and even incidences of dental cavities and gains in height and weight. Students working under high-pressure sodium vapour lamps were found to have the slowest rates of growth and development as well as the poorest levels of attendance and achievement.

Other studies have included differences in performance and mood under different kinds of lighting, in relation to gender and age. For example, there is evidence to suggest that children read more fluently in rooms that are brightly lit and may also perform better in maths tests.

Meanwhile, a recent pilot in a Californian school to replace costly, inefficient fluorescent lighting in classrooms to save energy, found

SHEDDING LIGHT

- Lighting should be used as tool to support learning
- Lighting has a real physical and psychological influence within our classrooms
- Multiple lighting scenes should be built into all parts of the building, including outdoor areas
- Light must be interference-free and supportive of ambient conditions (good contrasts, no glare, no flickering or humming)
- Individual adaptation should combine with automated processes

that adjustable white LED lighting, which allowed the teacher to control the colour and intensity of the classroom lighting, improved the learning environment, with observed improvements in student behaviour.

ADAPTING TO THE CHILD

After their teachers and the support of families, the physical environment is one of the most important factors affecting children's school performance. Children should not have to adapt to the environment, the environment should adapt to the child. But for this to be successful, a shift in policy and focus will be required that sees beyond academic standards, and makes more money available for building maintenance, including lighting.

Our classroom crisis can be solved if we can rapidly transition ministers away from their obsession with meeting academic targets and provide the funding needed to maintain our school buildings.

While lighting does account for the greatest proportion of energy costs in schools, good design, specification, management and controls can have a significant impact on limiting electricity consumption, saving energy, keeping running costs to a minimum and providing the nurturing environment our children need. Sustainability commitments, such as net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 are still achievable, but alongside solutions that also benefit our health and wellbeing.

We can and absolutely should use lighting as a supplementary tool to support learning activities, to help student-teacher communication and to positively affect students' activity levels and behaviours.



Graeme Shaw is Technical Director at Zumtobel Group.



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Cutting carbon footprints

High temperature heat pumps are being used as part of a pioneering decarbonisation project in Leeds schools

CIAT heat pumps are being used in a ground-breaking project by a multi-academy school trust to decarbonise heating across several schools.

The project is anticipated to reduce carbon emissions by more than 9,000 tonnes over the lifetime of the scheme and save around £84,000 a year in energy costs.

Abbey Multi-Academy Trust (Abbey MAT), based in Yorkshire, is installing 38 AquaCIAT TD300 air-source heat pumps in five schools, with the £5m project being funded under the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).

The scheme uses renewable electricity generated by solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays installed on school buildings, which partly power the CIAT heat pumps and help further reduce operating costs and carbon emissions.

During the summer, when schools are closed and energy use significantly lower, electricity produced by the PV arrays will be fed into the grid, producing an income for the Trust and helping to cover energy costs for the rest of the year.

HEAT PUMP CLUSTERS

David Ryder, head of IT and infrastructure at Abbey MAT, said: "The CIAT heat pumps are

deployed in clusters in the form of 'farms'. The units harvest low grade 'free' energy from the environment and upgrade it to a useful temperature, replacing the need for high carbon-emitting gas boilers in the majority of school buildings."

The key to success is optimising system performance by adjusting flow rates and set points to ensure comfortable indoor temperatures for students and staff throughout the day and over the year, as seasons change.

"The schools have undertaken a major transformation that sets them firmly on the path to becoming carbon neutral"

He added: "We are collaborating with our project partners, consultant Energy Management Group Ltd (EMG), Robert Whetham Associates, HVAC specialist BReng Hull, and equipment supplier Cool Designs, in an ongoing process to develop the best possible outcome for our schools and the environment."

Due to an impending funding deadline, Abbey MAT's grant application for the scheme to Salix Finance (which administers the PSDS on behalf of the UK government) required submission of detailed proposals for each school within a tight window of just two weeks.

The Trust worked closely with decarbonisation specialist EMG to prepare the application.

Working against the clock, one of the key challenges was to assess the

requirements for upgrading existing radiators, to take account of the lower water temperatures delivered by the heat pumps. Detailed room-by-room surveys were carried out by experts on the technical aspects of the grant submission.

The audit took account of the type and size of existing heat emitters, glazing, building fabric, room orientation, insulation and occupancy levels. It resulted in around 50 % of existing radiators being replaced with higher capacity units, or augmented with new units to achieve the required heating capacity. The additional investment required was covered by the successful PSDS grant.

Fine-tuning of the systems at the schools converted so far has already begun, with an initial water temperature of 65deg C in the early morning reduced to 50deg C once students are on site and in class, taking account of the circa 3KW of heat they contribute within the average classroom.

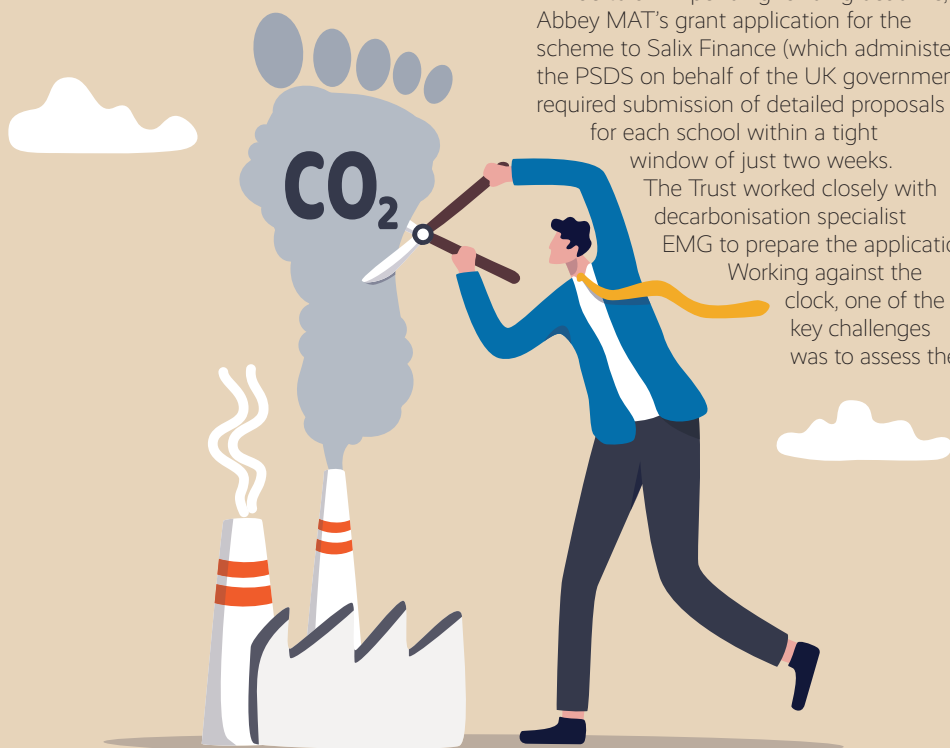
TEMPERATURE DATA

The Trust is developing an innovative school-wide heat map, produced using temperature data from new heat-sensitive fire alarm systems. "The idea is to give a real-time overview of actual conditions in each space across a school, so that set-points and flow-rates from the heat pumps can be further optimised," said David Ryder.

Paul Smith, sales director for Applied Products, Toshiba Carrier UK, said: "David Ryder and Abbey MAT have shown vision and an innovative approach in making the switch to renewable energy for their schools' heating needs.

"In adopting high performance CIAT heat pumps – with the added benefit of solar-generated electricity to power them – the schools have undertaken a major transformation that sets them firmly on the path to becoming carbon neutral. It is a journey that all public and commercial buildings will need to make if the UK is to achieve the nation's strategic goal of being carbon neutral by 2050."

Innovative projects such as this Abbey MAT scheme contribute to Carrier's target of reducing customers' carbon footprint by more than one gigaton, while also achieving carbon neutral operations by 2030, as outlined in the company's Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) Goals.



SAMSUNG



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PARTNER CONTENT

The Samsung Galaxy Book Go

A valuable piece of kit for busy teachers and students



AT A GLANCE

- Thin, compact, powerful laptop
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- Compatibility with wider Samsung ecosystem
- Long lasting battery to power through the day



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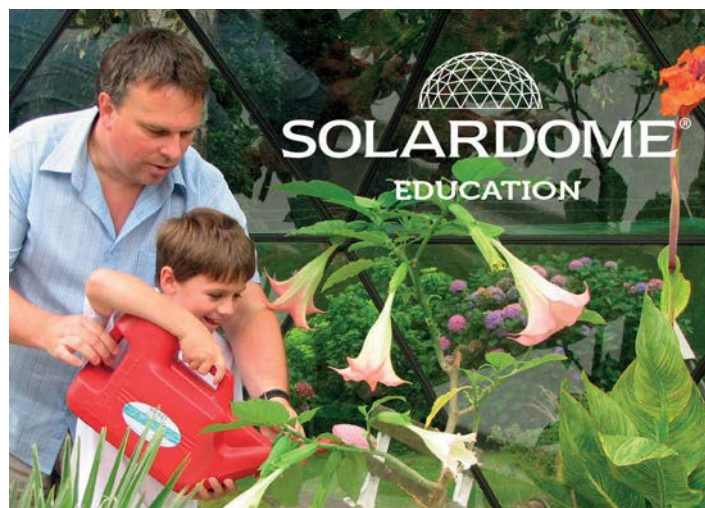
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AI IS THE PERFECT SIDEKICK FOR TEACHERS

Teachers should embrace the potential of emerging technologies in teaching and learning, says **Graham Glass**

The next generation of EdTech tools are incorporating AI features to help make the learning experience more engaging and personal for pupils, whilst reducing workloads for teachers, and enabling them to effectively monitor student progress and development.

If you're wondering how that works, the answer is simple.

AI is the perfect sidekick for teachers, providing them with a knowledgeable teaching assistant who can take over some tasks and free their time to focus on what's important — giving pupils more attention. For example, grading papers and working on other admin tasks also becomes easier once there is a trusty assistant to count on. Providing feedback is just as effective, especially when it's in the form of a personal message.

POWERED BY HUMANS

AI has incredible potential, but it works best when powered by the human element. Many teachers might be hesitant to explore it, but it's good to note that this

technology will not take over their role — it will only enhance and revolutionise teaching and learning.

For this to happen, learning management systems will have to evolve into intelligent learning platforms, which use AI to make teachers' lives easier and create a more enjoyable online learning experience for pupils. Let's go over some examples:

TASK AUTOMATION

Some of the most time-consuming tasks for teachers are creating lessons, grading work, sending messages to their pupils and enrolling them in classes.

Luckily, task automation has changed the way teachers go about their daily activities. Instead of enrolling children in classes or sending

messages manually, they can schedule those actions in the school learning management system (LMS). Additionally, by planning lessons through an automated system, this frees up some time for teachers to focus on more meaningful tasks such as one-to-one support for pupils.

Through AI, teachers will be able to upload all learning materials such as text files, videos, images, animations, and other types of documents. Then, the LMS will filter and sort them into classes ready for pupils.

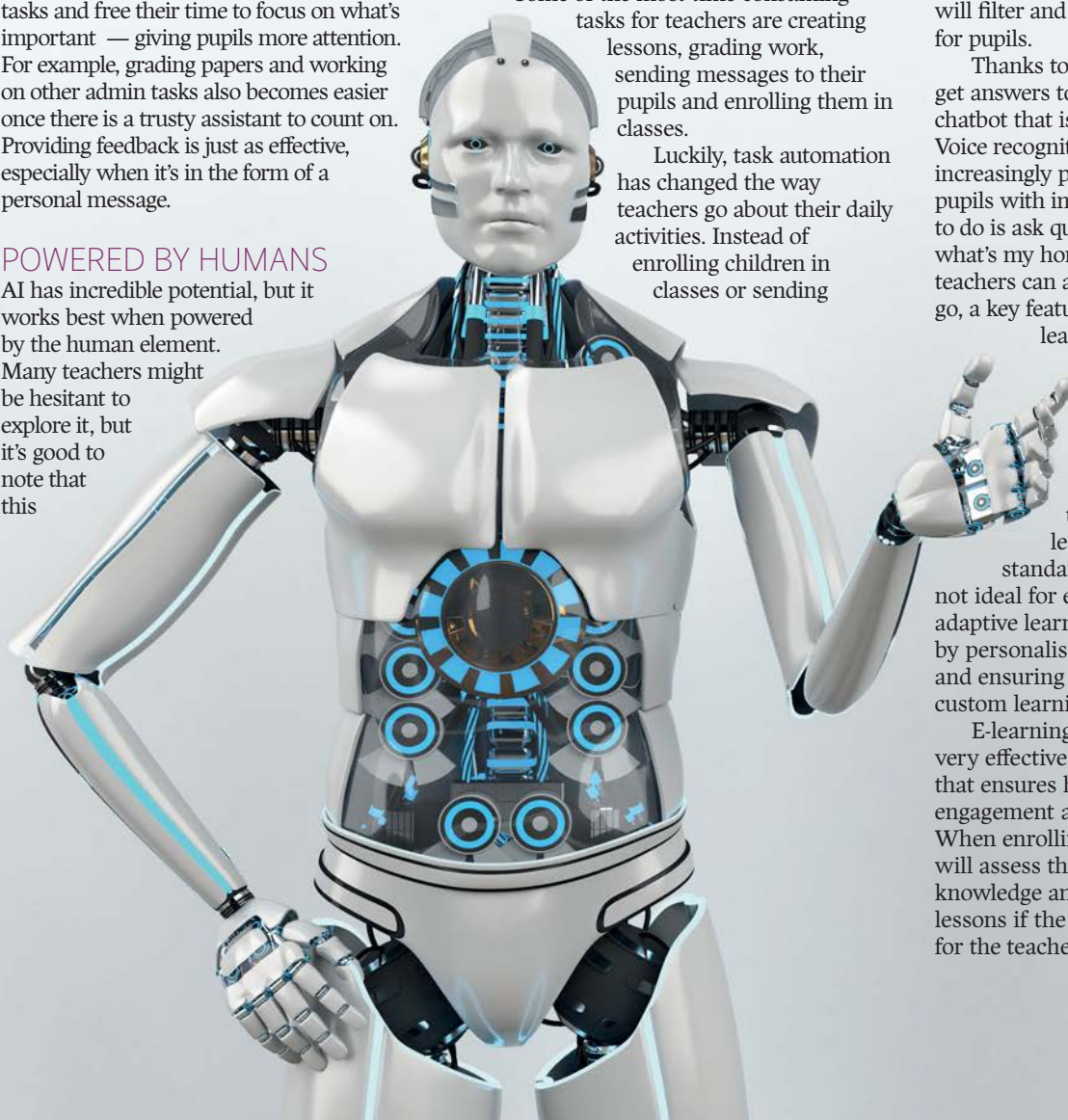
Thanks to task automation, pupils can get answers to their questions from a chatbot that is configured in advance. Voice recognition has also been an increasingly popular trend as it provides pupils with instant answers. All they need to do is ask questions such as "Alexa, what's my homework for today?", and teachers can also get updates on the go, a key feature of an intelligent learning platform.

ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Every pupil is different, from their preferences to their individual goals and learning pace. The

standardised model of learning is not ideal for everyone. Consequently, adaptive learning has supported teachers by personalising the learning journey and ensuring that each student gets a custom learning path.

E-learning systems are already very effective at providing content that ensures higher levels of engagement and understanding. When enrolling in a class, the LMS will assess the student's level of knowledge and only shows the lessons if the score is satisfactory for the teacher.



“It’s good to note that this technology will not take over a teacher’s role — it will only enhance and revolutionise teaching and learning”

Yet, AI takes things a step further and dynamically adapts that content. This equals less effort on the teachers’ part and more extraordinary achievements for pupils. The recommendations system considers personal goals, making learning more focused on the individual.

LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The concept of personalised recommendations has been around for some time already, Netflix being a good example. In education, recommendations are based on goals that teachers set in advance, and these can represent lessons or certificates of completion.

For example, educators will set up goals for their pupils, such as “learn geography basics”. That same goal is tied to other competencies like “fauna and flora”, “continents”, and “population”.

Next, the learning platform will recommend lessons to pupils based on their existing skills, and provide additional assistance to progress further. Furthermore, the system can detect students at risk, allowing teachers to intervene.

There is no doubt that AI systems will power the future of teaching and learning. Thanks to an intelligent learning platform, educators save time on their tasks and become proactive while encouraging young learners to achieve their goals. Classes become more exciting and interactive for students as they get suitable learning recommendations at the right time.



Graham Glass is the CEO of Cypher Learning.



TIDYING UP TECH

Two years on from the first lockdown it’s time to get those digital resources organised, says **Simon Freeman**

Covid-19 caused great upheaval for this generation of school children. Research from the Education Policy Institute suggests a minimum of £78bn in lifetime earnings will be lost by children who missed out on in-person education in England (£46,000 each). A major task lies ahead in dealing with our new reality. Now more than ever, we need enhanced teaching to prevent any further negative side effects of children’s increased time in the digital learning world.

Unfortunately, there are still gaps in schools’ technological capabilities. An estimated 44% of teachers and school leaders did not have apps to capture work and assessments and only 39% had the capacity for parents to view student data. As students, parents and teachers continue to live with the risk of having to self-isolate, a future-fit Management Information System (MIS) is essential for giving teachers the right intelligence to ensure no student misses out on critical learning.

To grapple with this successfully the education system needs to tidy up its tech and data.

Investment in technology proved critical during lockdowns and will become even more so in efforts to close the digital gap, and ensure every student can achieve their potential. With cloud-based big data and predictive analytics platforms the new norm in schools, teachers will be able to better evaluate the progress and needs of students and ultimately intervene earlier to help them stay on track.

A tidy environment creates a calm mind more open to learning and succeeding. Yet existing tech stacks in schools and MATs are creating messy classrooms both online and in person; with patchworks of short-term fixes and outdated IT systems often locked away in school admin offices.

During the pandemic school leaders were

forced to spend precious time and energy manually searching for vital information to successfully deliver blended learning. While many teachers created their own unique workarounds to ensure they could continue improving the life chances of every pupil, this isn’t a sustainable long-term solution.

As we continue to navigate a new landscape, there must be a concerted effort to tidy up technology stacks and data across schools and MATs. School leaders report data and analysis as a significant issue that impacts their workload. There is a solution to this challenge. Harnessing cloud technology and the real-time intelligence it brings to its full potential, will benefit everyone – students, teachers and administrators – in the long-run.

From registrations, absences, detentions, financial planning, staff development and reporting, teachers need software tools that provide them with real-time information so they can act quickly and step in at the point of need to create the best possible outcome for every pupil. No matter whether in-person or virtual, teachers need complete access to accurate information on students’ academic, wellbeing and safeguarding data to create a holistic view of each pupil.

By having better information and intelligence, teachers can be empowered with the insight they need to make smarter decisions about schools too. The right technology can shape the culture of learning, deliver smarter outcomes and ultimately give teachers the precious time they need to be the best versions of themselves.



Simon Freeman, MD for Education at IRIS Software Group.

Electric dreams

Les Hopper outlines how innovative thinking allowed schools to deliver imaginative learning online

The ease, accessibility and potential of digital learning is inspiring an ever-growing community of educators.

According to Pearson's research, more than a quarter of teachers (26%) believe that the shift to online learning during the pandemic led to increased creativity in lesson delivery or content. Here, three Pearson National Teaching Award Winners share what this looked like for them, and how EdTech has made an impact on their long-term visions for teaching.

Magic and awe

At Rowledge C of E Primary School, lockdown prompted some wholly imaginative approaches to lessons, in which staff broadcast dances, teachers became secret agents assisting with "undercover learning," and YouTube videos gained thousands of views.

Deputy headteacher Joe Yates explains: "A huge driver was allowing pupils to interact and engage with us and each other whilst at home. Getting creative with our videos and learning themes ensured that families bought in to what we were doing, and continued to bring smiles to our community."

"Technology can take our learners to places they would never be able to reach," he adds, "in immersive ways that we could not replicate using traditional methods. It is an exciting time to be a teacher and I look forward to seeing our teaching evolve with the digital landscape."

Collaboration and confidence

Meanwhile, educators across the 31 Star Academies schools successfully trialled techniques and shared best practice, with one primary academy – The Olive School, Bolton – commended by the Department for Education as an example of excellence in blended teaching practices.

"A significant number of pupils at the school have English as an additional language – a challenge which was ordinarily met by immersing

pupils in vocabulary and syntactic language patterns in school," Sabina Saeed, the principal, explains.

"During lockdown, we worked to deliver three language-rich remote 'live' lessons a day, which prioritised vocabulary development and enabled pupils to interact with staff and peers. A 'story of the week' gave pupils multiple opportunities to hear, repeat and memorise language patterns. As a result, pupils continued to follow the routines that were well established in school and, through regular practice and repetition of language, their vocabulary continued to develop in line with expectations."

Spurred on by their online learning success throughout the pandemic, EdTech is now firmly embedded in the teaching practices at The Olive School, Bolton – and across Star Academies – and the school is committed to exploring new ways that technology can enhance its pupils' learning.

Enabling accessibility

At the Deaf Academy, staff seized opportunities to explore everything EdTech could offer, creating adaptive digital approaches where none had been before. As teacher Matt Jenkins recalled: "To be an academy with no previous experience in online learning, experimenting and really pushing new ways of teaching in deaf education, it was really something special."

Staff helped learners thrive by spotlighting interpreters on Zoom calls, developing British Sign Language resources that other teachers could use, supervising break-out sessions for social time, developing No-Screen Wednesdays to minimise online fatigue; even spreading their outreach further with a new public online platform, Ask Deaf Teachers.

"Our Online Academy ensured every single child and young person had full access to their education and therapies," Matt said. "It was exhilarating, it was as if with entering the pandemic, we were able to redefine our methods of teaching with a whole new toolkit."

"Students have a high level of self-belief and, even a year on from the Online Academy, students have retained their EdTech skills and use them daily."

Looking to the future

It's an exciting time for us all in education as we share these gains in creativity and innovation, shaping solutions for the classroom and beyond.

Together, we can further enable access for all, facilitate teacher and student creativity, and harness insights to enrich every learning journey.



Les Hopper is director of digital and assessment at Pearson. Read more about digital learning and innovation, edtech solutions and free support from Pearson at go.pearson.com/22DLI.

NEED TO KNOW - Q&A

“Polluted air affects pupil performance”

Edward Ballsdon explains how air purification can enhance safety, improve outcomes and save money



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Rensair is a specialist in air purification.

Its patented technology was developed to meet the strict standards of Scandinavian hospitals and is independently validated by scientific research laboratories. Rensair meets UK SAGE committee and World Health Organization standards for clean air.

How can schools help mitigate the risk of Covid?

Research shows that Covid is an airborne transmitted disease, with more serious illness resulting from the inhalation of small infected aerosols that penetrate deep into the lungs. The solution is to ensure that there is no build-up of infected aerosol particles in poorly ventilated spaces, by either ventilating a room or, failing that, by cleaning the air through effective purification.

Does the government offer any guidance on ventilation?

The Department of Health & Social Care references the WHO's recommended air change rate of 10 litres per second per person. The UK SAGE Committee advocates portable air purifiers to bridge the gap where ventilation is poor, but that advice has not been widely broadcast. Instead, the government has focused on opening windows (impractical in winter) and installing CO2 sensors, which warn when there is inadequate indoor air quality but offer no solution.

What should schools look for in an air purifier?

The UK SAGE committee recommends HEPA filtration and UVC light to capture and inactivate pathogens, backed by evidence of independent tests. It warns that technologies using chemical reaction are unproven and could have harmful



side effects. Air purifiers must be heavy duty, with a powered fan system to enable air cleaning throughout an entire space. Residential air purifiers will not serve as a substitute for a hospital grade device containing a powerful fan.

Is air purification more economical than ventilation?

A batch of portable air purifiers is a fraction of the cost of an integrated HVAC system and can be put to work immediately, with no



EDWARD BALLSDON, is co-founder and CEO of Rensair.

disruption. Air purification units consume about the same power as a fridge freezer, costing just a few pence per day. Further substantial savings can be made on energy (and associated carbon emissions) from not having to heat or cool fresh air intake.

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Beyond the pandemic, does clean air have other benefits?

A recent Harvard study points to a direct relationship between the amount of fine particulate matter in the air and how people perform in mental tests. The more polluted the air, the worse people perform. Another piece of research by Philips Foundation and the University of Manchester showed that, by sustaining 20% lower air pollution levels in the classroom, the development of a child's working memory can improve by 6%.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

- **Traps and destroys 99.9% of viruses, bacteria, allergens and other particulate matter.**
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Is the Online Safety Bill the answer to schools' woes?

New legislation on internet safety needs to be monitored by schools, says **Mark Bentley**

The NSPCC has long branded the internet the Wild West, and for those of you dealing daily with class WhatsApp arguments, Year 4s on Instagram and Year 6s on 18-rated games, you might be inclined to agree.

The UK is finalising its Online Safety Bill (with the final version going through parliament while this article is going to press), and the new law is set to change all that for the better. Or will it?

Normally in education we focus on Department for Education and Ofsted announcements but, over the past few months, the number of Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport press releases with relevance to keeping children safe online have been more and more regular. It is worth schools keeping an eye on how new legislation will affect protections on the internet and how we support the children and young people in our care.

SCAMS AND TROLLS

So what's going to change? Overall, the aim is to make things illegal online if they are illegal offline, and to give the same protections to children and other vulnerable users in the online space that you would expect offline. You will hear lots in the press about online scams and cyberflashing, protection against trolls and anonymous users, all of which will be brilliant to see.

Probably the one thing that would transform children and young people's experiences online is if they were not able to access apps, sites and games that are supposed to be for over 13s or over 18s. Pornography is the classic example here, and that is something that, after several changes, will be covered by the bill for commercial providers and social media where lots of this content ends up.

It's worth mentioning that various studies have shown the scale with which online porn is being seen by children and the harm which is being done. Not to mention that so much of this is extreme and exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours that are being 'taught' to our young people by the internet.

Age verification will now be required, and not just the classic "enter your date of birth" or "grab your parents' credit cards" but true user identification. There are some privacy concerns about this from some parties, but the last few years have seen some great BSI standards on how to do this without sharing your identity with tech companies, and many

new providers of the required technology.

That's important because the next steps are expected to be for this same kind of approach to be taken for the use of social media in general, which may lead to more age-appropriate and child-friendly apps thriving if they no longer need to compete with large platforms, which claim to be for older users, but are actually full of children. That may help schools with messaging around only using age-appropriate sites for students and parents, as we know how easy it is for these to be undermined.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

One thing that has not been covered explicitly by the bill is parental controls. The new independent regulator will be Ofcom, and hopefully the codes of conduct they lay out will cover these issues and help ensure more effective controls. I would like to see more here, however, to turn on child settings by default and make them easier to use.

For now, and in the future, this is a key area where schools can support families, by pointing them to the controls already in place – a little bit of effort before giving children new devices or allowing them onto new apps and games definitely pays off in the long run, so make sure you regularly remind parents of the settings and other measures they can take.

Keep an eye on the news as there are some great opportunities for class discussion and debate which may reveal a lot to you about what we need to keep children safe.

The Bill will never be perfect but anything that helps keep children safe is welcome and it is good to see us moving in the right direction to create a safer internet.

"A bit of effort before allowing children onto new apps and games definitely pays off in the long run"



Mark Bentley is Safeguarding and Cybersecurity Lead, LGfL – The National Grid for Learning.



CATCH-UP KIDS

Not sure how to bolster confidence and improve attainment?
Online tutoring could be the answer, says **Adele Key**

Like every primary school across the nation, we were very much aware of the impact that lockdown had on our children, before the second bout even began. Of our 210 pupils on roll, 21 per cent are eligible for pupil premium funding, with about 16 per cent classified as having special educational needs. Missing lessons and adapting to new routines had been tricky for many.

We were already doing our own catch-up tuition with our Year 6 children after school in pre-pandemic times, but I didn't feel we could continue a home-grown approach during Covid, as we were all exhausted from the imposed restrictions. So I recommended to my headteacher that we should buy in online tuition, rather than using our own staff and adding to their workload.

We managed to find some funding from our budget, later subsidised through our recovery premium, and started a trial of online tuition with 12 Y6s; six focusing on English and six on maths. We chose these children based on our end of autumn term NFER data; they were all still working at the very beginning of Y6 expectations, and we felt these pupils needed a boost in their confidence that would help them with attainment as well.

We could tell this first spell of live online tuition worked well, simply because we could see the links the children were making between their sessions and what they were doing in class, so we expanded it to include additional tutoring for Y5 once the children were back in school in March.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

We buy online tuition in blocks of one-hour sessions involving one tutor with small groups of two or three children (we use Pearson, but there are multiple providers out there). Once we've specified the subject and topics we want to cover, we choose the tutors and then send them a short biography of each child they will be working with. The information includes where they are in their age-related expectations and the key areas in which they need help. At first our children had weekly sessions, but we soon moved to twice weekly as we felt it was much more beneficial, so we've done that for all pupils this term, too.

“Online tuition could replace some of the interventions we already use in school, such as after-school tuition, which is currently delivered by staff members”



We've worked hard to marry up the tuition sessions with the concepts we're teaching in class as much as we can. In maths, the Y5 teacher chose number units for tuition sessions to support arithmetic and improve speed and accuracy. In Y6, I chose fractions as I know this is an area of weakness and it crops up a lot in SATs. It was a little more straightforward for English as we chose reading skills, which are transferrable across all aspects of the curriculum.

It is vital that we have a feedback loop, too. Most of the time we will see the children 'getting' concepts that challenged them before, but we also get feedback directly from tutors. At the end of a session, the tutor will rate each child on their confidence, understanding and engagement using a function on the Bramble live online tuition platform. They can also give us more detailed written feedback through a text summary, picking out the areas where a child has excelled, but also pointing out concepts they struggle with. We read the feedback every week and it helps to inform our own lesson planning as well.

Each session is automatically recorded and transcribed, so we can use this feature as an





added layer of safeguarding. If there was ever an issue during an online session, we would be able to quickly check the transcript, and the children are aware that we could go in and check up on what happened in a session if necessary. We've never had to use the feature and never expect to, but it gives teachers, tutors and parents peace of mind.

HOW DO CHILDREN RESPOND?

When I go to get the children for their tuition sessions, they're already out of their seats and on their way. Children are so motivated by technology these days that they don't seem to see it as work. It's also easier for many children to say that they don't understand something when they are in a group of three learning online than when they are in a class of 30. We had one Y6 girl who was very quiet in class but when she was on a live online tuition session she couldn't stop talking! The fact that the sessions mainly use an online interactive whiteboard with brief face-to-face introductions and goodbyes probably helps.

The children build up really lovely relationships with their tutors, too. Some found it quite an emotional experience when they got to the end of their sessions! I think the online approach works so well because our children see it as a privilege to be chosen; they know they will get lots of attention from their tutor – something which is not always available in a whole-class situation.

Needless to say, we're continuing with the programme this year. We've already got 16 Y5s signed up, along with six Y6s and we are about to include another 12 Y6 pupils. I think there will be a permanent place for this type of support at our school even when the pandemic is long gone. I talked to my headteacher about this and he agreed that the live online tuition could replace some of the interventions that we already use in school, such as after-school tuition, which is currently delivered by staff members.

My main piece of advice for anybody who goes down the tuition support route is to meet the tutor online at the start of a block of sessions. Taking the time to develop a relationship and to talk through the

EEF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SMALL GROUP TUTORING

When implementing tuition, schools should consider these points to ensure positive impact:



Accurately identifying the pupils that require additional support.



Understanding the learning gaps of the pupils that receive small group tuition and using this knowledge to select curriculum content appropriately.



Ensuring teachers are well-prepared for having high quality interactions with pupils, such as delivering well-planned feedback.



Ensuring that small group tuition is well-linked to classroom content.

Read more at tinyurl.com/tp-EEFsmallgroup

background of each child makes it easier for the tutor to hit the ground running. We have met all of our pupils' tutors and have built good relationships with them.

You also need to be aware of your technology capabilities. Sharing devices doesn't give pupils the best experience, so each child needs access to their own. We've found that iPads don't work as well so I'd recommend using either laptops or Chromebooks. Also, 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.

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 you get going it's very straightforward and the benefits come back by the bucket load.



Adele Key is deputy headteacher and Y6 teacher, as well as English and maths subject leader at Woodlea

Primary School in Chester-le-Street, County Durham.

HEADING INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

Tight school budgets and the pace of tech advancement mean you need a school digital strategy, says **Sue Birchall**

Many schools have approached digital and ICT innovation with caution, partly because of the financial commitments involved, but also due to lack of experience in what is a fast-changing industry.

Support from external experts is abundant, but there is no doubting that 'going down the wrong path' is an expensive error to make. School business professionals like me are often the voice of caution, citing value for money, sustainability and renewal concerns amongst the reasons for taking a moment to pause and think carefully.

However, there is no denying that our young people are increasingly exposed to the latest ICT and all that entails in their day-to-day lives and, as educators, we need to be in tune with this.

Government policy in 2019 highlighted the need for schools and colleges to embed technology effectively and pledged to support them in the effective adoption and use of edtech – outlining both the opportunities and barriers.

The DfE then commissioned CooperGibson Research (CGR) to conduct a study to establish the state and usage of technology across schools in England (available at tinyurl.com/SchoolsTechnologysurvey), which produced some interesting findings – more on which later.

FIT FOR PURPOSE

In the past two years, schools have been challenged by circumstances to take a big step into the world of ICT, which has become essential for the continued delivery of teaching and learning.

This quickly highlighted how our students have hugely varying levels of access to ICT, with the government stepping in to try and provide laptops and internet connections to those without. After all, you cannot launch a new digital initiative without the appropriate equipment to support it.

The same is true when it comes to children and staff's knowledge of ICT. You can only introduce a technological transformation if the people who are supposed to deliver it have the necessary basic skills. This was pointed out by CooperGibson Research, whose report found the education sector is

still in need of significant support with the fundamentals when it comes to developing ICT within their settings.

THE DIGITAL UNKNOWN

The question is this: is there a desire within schools and academies to look at how we can develop our ICT – not just as means to deliver the curriculum but also to expose our students to the vast range of new technologies now available?

Is there also a need to look at upgrading our school systems, offering remote access for staff, with adequate security and accessibility – the pandemic having highlighted the benefits of flexible working?

In both cases I believe the answer is 'yes' – it may well be time we ventured into the digital unknown – but not without caution.

BALANCING SPENDING

Firstly, there is a balance required here. Education institutions are not cash rich and desires of this nature need careful planning if they are to be sustained beyond the initial implementation. The funds that we have available at school level are often not even sufficient to offer the upgrades and replacements that are identified in our existing ICT development plans, providing little capacity for the purchase of new technologies that might form part of more ambitious initiatives. This, then, requires a funding strategy which at present is not supported by government financial investment.

The 21-22 CooperGibson Research survey identified this, along with the need for more central support and guidance on planning, procurement, training and sustainability. It is clear that academies and newly built schools are a few steps ahead, at least in terms of their digital infrastructure and planning. The question has to be whether we sit back and wait for a central digital plan, or we start to plan locally to overcome the increasing digital divide between education and the wider world.

WHERE TO START?

As with all projects, we need to begin with a business planning model.

Starting with your aims and purpose, you need to decide what this looks like for your setting. We all know that every school is different, not just within phases but also in locality, cohorts and environment. That is not to say that you should limit your aims, all students need to be exposed to a variety of learning opportunities. After all, you may be educating the next Elon Musk!

The next step would be to match these aims to your school or academy development planning. Any innovations should support your school's vision for the



future and need to be incorporated into whole-school planning,

In my school, we have an ICT development plan which, according to the report from the 20-21 survey, is not as common as you might think, especially at primary level. If you don't have something like this in place, I would suggest that ICT planning sits alongside the budget, and SIP / ADP would assist in avoiding any costly purchasing mistakes.

BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

As with all purchases within school, we must be aware of value for money in terms of the anticipated outcomes. Technology that supports school operations does, generally speaking, help to make savings thanks to increased efficiencies – and this in turn frees up funding for other initiatives. But this is

only the case if the purchase is timely and adds value to your core purpose.

Financial planning is imperative for your ICT purchases and especially any new projects. Aside from the initial purchase, sustainability must be considered; your planning should incorporate both immediate and long-term costs, such as money for repair and, eventually, replacements. This is especially pertinent when new innovations become embedded into the school's practice.

MANAGING RISK

Risk management also needs to be part of your business planning. We are all aware of the current, and sometimes sudden, increases in school running costs, so you need to consider and include alternative planning to take unexpected expenses into account.

For instance, should you have spare

devices in the event of damage? Is it worth taking out insurance? What would be the impact to school systems in the event of a breakdown or loss of service? Also be aware that, if you are purchasing new technologies, the likelihood is they will be upgraded, improved or replaced at a fairly rapid rate, and you need to plan for this.

There are always risks for schools when it comes to investing in new technologies, but without doubt it is a risk worth taking. We are charged with educating our young people, readying them to take part in the wider world, and ICT is a huge part of that.



Sue Birchall is Director of Business and Outreach at The Malling School.

“Stepping into an edtech transformation is pointless if those who deliver it cannot access improvements through a lack of basic skills”



Is your school accurately assessing your students?

Emma Ringe - Schools Director, Whizz Education

Real-Time Assessment and reporting on children's progress across the whole school, are some of the most significant challenges facing schools today. It can come at a substantial cost yet often does not provide the information needed to gain the insights to make robust decisions.

What if there was an education consultancy who could provide you with:

- Real-time, continuous formative assessment
- The same reporting quality across every class
- A standard learning metric that benchmarks every student in your school
- Data-driven instruction embedded in the school day
- An Education Success Partner dedicated to your school to determine the best format of the tutoring sessions

Whizz Education collaborates with schools across the UK to identify specific learning objectives and develop strategic implementation plans which encompass; high impact maths tutoring, continuous formative assessment and course correction, driven by combining quantitative learning data with an understanding of our partners' local context. An added benefit to Whizz Education is our ability to support Special Educational Needs and disabilities students (SEND) for in school and at home learning. Whizz can remove barriers to promote equity and inclusion to ensure that every student can achieve in maths!

As a long-standing education partner accountable for learning outcomes within international schools, Whizz Education can support you and your school through a consultative process

that takes into account the unique context of your school, to recover lost learning experienced by your students during the pandemic, rapidly.

Lorna Blackhurst, former Deputy Head Teacher and Gordon Farquhar Head Teacher King James Academy: *"The data output for the tech platform along with qualitative insights were used to draw tangible insights to ensure progress was being made and that we were meeting our target of 50% children achieving ARE in maths within the academic year."*

Sarah Claflin, deputy headteacher and subject leader in maths St. Michael's VA Junior School: *"Whizz Education partnered with St. Michael's to help them enrich their classroom teaching with Maths-Whizz, providing personalised learning for students and empowering teachers to instantly track every student's progress. Since starting with Maths-Whizz, our year-on-year SATs results have got better and better; our scores shot up!"*

Jess Morris-Marsham, Maths Leader, Team Leader for Years 3 and 4 and Year 5 Teacher at Roskear Primary: *"Every half term, we assess standardised age scores. The results have shown accelerated progress. For example, our most recent assessments identified the Year 2 pupils who were below ARE in the autumn. Following the after-school interventions, where children used the Maths-Whizz virtual tutor for two hours per week, each one of those children had reached ARE within six weeks."*

Whizz Education uses analytics generated by the virtual tutor Maths-Whizz, synthesised with qualitative feedback and reflections from our Education Success Partners to enable the implementation plan to be refined so students and teachers realise the full benefits of individualised tutoring. We refer back to the objectives of improving

ARE and increasing the Maths-Age for example, by working in collaboration with schools to understand the context, any challenges and behaviours, and then we develop a course correction to improve performance.

Data can also be used to compare students' progress with performance in a school's chosen third party assessment. Reliable data can be used to supply to boards of governors and OFSTED.

Whizz Education collaborates with schools across the UK to identify specific learning objectives and develop strategic implementation plans. By working together, we can make a significant contribution to recovery through data driven, continuous assessment programmes designed to spot learning gaps and enabling teachers to give targeted support without additional burden.



Emma Ringe
School Director
Whizz Education

Computer says yes

The virtual parents' evening is set to remain a part of the calendar, says **Simon Hay**



During much of the past two years, schools have been a physical no-go zone for almost everyone but staff and children, forcing school leaders to look for new ways to work with parents.

Many schools – and parents – have discovered the benefits of online parents' evenings, with technology making the process of booking and managing time slots much easier for everyone involved.

Furthermore, the option of attending the meeting remotely has meant that parents are more likely to attend.

There are many benefits of virtual parents' evenings. To start with, the evenings themselves tend to run more smoothly as each meeting is forced to keep to time.

With the length of each appointment controlled by whichever platform is being used, conversations must be to the point and cannot drag over into the next meeting. "Computer says no" is far more compelling than a teacher desperately trying to bring the meeting to a close whilst the family in front of them is determined to continue.

GREATER FOCUS

Conversations have tended to become more focused in their nature. Historically, the discussion at parents' evenings centred on children's learning and progress, before moving on to goals and targets for the rest of the year.

However, the first part here is merely about providing historic information, when it

is the second part that is the most important.

With conversations forced to be shorter, schools are providing information to parents before the meeting begins, often in the form of continuous reporting. This helps to ensure that questions are more pertinent and potentially fewer in number.

STICKING TO THE POINT

Parents don't need teachers to read grades to them – that much can be communicated continuously through the year. What they need is advice on the actions to take following those grades. Education is an interaction between the different parties involved: teachers, children and parents, and the human element of this process is an essential one. Unfortunately, the real benefits of these discussions can all too easily get lost while we talk about learning and results.

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

Of course, you can't change parents' evenings overnight. If you are going to engage parents in this way, then some of their previous assumptions will need to be challenged. They need to understand that ups and downs are a normal part of children's progress – in other words, that they don't need to contact the school every time there is a change. Many teachers have already discovered that flipped learning allows them to spend time more effectively with children, and there is no reason why the same strategy should not work with parents as well.

Technology is allowing us to focus on the purpose of parents' evenings and to look at how we might use them more effectively. They have become a forum through which to discuss how to improve a child's learning, rather than a snatched conversation in which to cram a whole term's worth of feedback.



Simon Hay is co-founder and CEO at Firefly, the school engagement platform. A short guide to effectively managing virtual parents' evenings is available at tinyurl.com/HTevenings

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Improve your feedback from virtual parents' evenings with this suggested questionnaire for parents:

Parents' Evening Feedback Questionnaire

We would like to hear how you felt it went. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this short survey so we can review the new procedures for next term's meeting.

Did you find it easy to book an appointment slot?

Yes/No

Was five minutes enough time to discuss your child's progress?

Yes/No

Did you feel able to ask the questions you and your child needed to?

Agree

Disagree

Other (please specify)

Did you feel your child's teacher knows your child?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

Did you feel informed about your child's learning plan and next steps?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

Do you have any other comments or areas we could improve on for our parents' evening next term?

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 students, it's important to recognise they need to

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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.

My digital journey

Primary Teacher of the Year 2021, **Jackie Birch**, was converted to technology use in lockdown

As I sat in our staffroom at the very start of lockdown in March 2020 to be told that school would close and children would be learning from home, I was filled with absolute dread.

The enormity of our children missing valuable education time with their friends and the thought of how I would teach children with an iPad that I could barely use, mortified me. How could I give these children my absolute best when my digital skills were so poor?

I accidentally took a photo of my leg as I sat there; I couldn't even take a picture, never mind video myself, download information or upload lessons!

Fortunately, I'm supported by amazing colleagues who gathered round to coach and support me with skills that I would need when working alone, from home.

It was the start of an amazing journey that I have travelled alongside my students. I had to step up to the mark.

That weekend I decided that I needed to overcome my self-consciousness at being videoed, so I filmed myself delivering my first lesson, and prepared and uploaded lessons ready for the next day. I found that being organised and uploading lessons the day before took away some of the anxieties of using technology and I quickly became more confident in these skills. Some days I videoed my dog and called it Maths with Maggie, to try to deliver lessons in a different way and to engage children.

Back in school full time, from June 2020, I continued to deliver digital lessons to those children at home as well as utilising my newfound skills in class. I created an iMovie celebrating my children's time in Year 2 and shared this with parents and children at home. I received so many messages saying how much this was appreciated when children were still at home and hadn't seen their friends in many weeks.

When back in school, all of our team were encouraged to carry out Apple training and become Apple Teachers. We are a competitive team and all of our staff gained Apple Teacher status. Our school and Trust



“The enormity of our children missing valuable education, and the thought of how I would teach children with an iPad that I could barely use, mortified me”

have made major improvements in the use of technology and our digital strategy aims to empower pupils to control their own learning and prepare them to thrive in today's digital world.

All of our children in KS2 have an iPad, and each class in KS1 and EYFS have a number of iPads. As a result of using

technology, children are able to access a range of learning opportunities, both inside and outside the school day. Students have developed their skills, are able to set their own goals; their learning is personalised, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

As Covid restrictions were still not fully lifted, my colleague and I created a digital Nativity with children learning lines and British Sign Language carols. We then had to find a digital platform to upload a lengthy video. This can't replace the joy of seeing a live performance but went some way to ensuring parents and children weren't missing out completely.

Two years down the line I'm a digital convert and I don't go into the 'Panic Room' at the thought of using a new app, Jamboard, Padlet or screen mirroring. I don't leave school without my iPad. Zoom and Teams calls to communicate with parents and colleagues have become second nature. My daily teaching involves learning experiences planned and delivered using the iPad and increasing opportunities for students to develop their skills.

I'm much more confident in teaching them to use the iPads (TTRockstars, Bug Club and Phonics Play) and programs such as Pages, Notes and iMovies.

We talk to children about perseverance and resilience, so what message would I be sending to them if I hadn't risen to the challenges and given them my best? As I said at the start, in the words of Strictly, “I've been on a 'journey' and it's continuing...”



Jackie Birch is assistant principal and Year 2 teacher at St Peter's C. of E. Primary School, Hindley, part of Quest Trust. She won the Award for Teacher of the Year in a Primary School, in 2021.

SPARKING CONFIDENCE THROUGH DIGITAL DRAMA

Remote lessons can create opportunities for pupils that teachers may not have realised were possible, says **Sarah Headen**

The thought of remote teaching during the pandemic filled me with dread. How would I engage 25 children contained in digital boxes?

How would they learn when we could not be physically together? And I'm not going to lie – to begin with it was tough, very tough. Once I started a meeting to find one child bouncing on a trampoline whilst eating a baguette and another who had turned their video off and changed their name to 'Reconnecting'. It was clear that I would need to do something more to gain their attention, and fast!

DIGITAL DRAMA BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

It was around this time that I was lucky enough to discover Creation Theatre's new digital learning venture – Home Delivery, when my daughter signed up to take part in their sessions. I had been to see Creation Theatre's in-person shows before and enjoyed their site-responsive productions and their imaginative approach to portraying classic stories. The organisation is one of the largest producers of theatre in Oxford and also runs drama classes for children and young people in term time after school and in the holidays.

They pivoted their business model and developed online drama classes for children, all based around different classic stories. My seven-year-old daughter's first session was *Treasure Island* and it was clear from the get-go that Creation had thought hard about how to play to the strengths of a digital platform. Within a very active session, my daughter was hiding from a 'black spot' which magically appeared on the screen, using her imagination to create her own pirate name and interacting with other children as they virtually passed treasure to each other.

The company used a combination of technical wizardry including sound effects and picture overlays, along with fun games and activities, to ensure that children were actively engaged throughout. This was certainly not children sitting staring like zombies at the screen as I had pictured previously when anyone mentioned 'remote learning'. My daughter felt like she had been on an adventure on the high seas and all from the comfort of her own home.

ORANGE JUICE AND GIANT PEAS

I began to incorporate the ideas I observed watching my daughter participate within my own remote teaching. During our study of 'weather around the world', we had been reading *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* and I began to play around with the settings on our learning platform. By using a green screen and adding a virtual background, we were able to create our own weather reports of falling food, from seas of orange juice to hailstorms of giant peas.

The enthusiasm from the children was immediately evident and some had even gone to the effort of making their own YouTube videos complete with backgrounds and introductory theme tunes. These effects were really enhanced by the digital setting and would have been difficult to achieve in the same way in the classroom.

Many people were delighted to be back in school and to put remote teaching behind them when we were allowed to return to our classrooms. However, it showed me that digital learning can be incredibly inspiring and exciting and that there are opportunities to develop children's imagination and confidence beyond the walls of the classroom. I missed the creative challenge and innovation I had discovered with online learning so when an opportunity arose to join the Creation Theatre digital learning team, I leapt at the chance.

"This was certainly not children sitting staring like zombies at the screen as I had pictured previously when anyone mentioned 'remote learning'"

BEING INCLUSIVE

Learning digitally has had a huge impact on my daughter. Before the pandemic, her school had raised that she may be on the autistic spectrum. Social situations caused her anxiety, and out of school clubs made her worried about how she should behave.

When she started sessions with Home Delivery, we saw immediately that the digital set up suited her. She was in her own home where she knew the space and could find help if she needed it. She was encouraged to engage and speak to the group, but from behind the safety of a computer screen and with leaders who understood her needs. Over time, her confidence has grown, and it is hard to believe she is the same child when I see her screaming full pelt at the screen as one of Henry V's ferocious knights!

We are only at the beginning of understanding how online learning can benefit neurologically diverse children. Barriers that can be triggers for autistic





THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING DIGITALLY

- Digital wizardry captures and engages children's interest
- Boosts confidence of pupils of all abilities
- Reduces mental load on parents
- Potentially allows children to see family and friends who live further afield. Many of Creation Theatre's members book on the same sessions as cousins or friends elsewhere

children are removed with home access and the highly physical, energetic nature of the sessions lends itself well to children with ADHD.

It's not only neurologically diverse children who benefit from extracurricular activities delivered at home. A high prevalence of children with ASD or ADHD will have a parent with a similarly diverse brain, which can lead to anxiety about the travel and logistics associated with in-person events, or a struggle with executive function required to get multiple children to the right place at the right time.

One mum shared with me recently that while her daughter has rarely missed a Home Delivery session where she is emailed a reminder 10 minutes before with a link, she misses swimming lessons most weeks through either totalling forgetting or taking so long getting organised to leave the house it ends up not being worth going.

RIGOUR AND TRANSPARENCY

A challenge and ultimately a benefit, of delivering sessions to children in their homes is the level of transparency to parents. Experience of teaching children in a room has taught me that even during the most engaging lessons you can easily lose a child to daydreaming, picking at their shoe or re-styling another child's hair. Any lapse of engagement online is visible to the parent so effective sessions must be prepped and tested with rigour.

It's similar to the pioneering approach used by Sesame Street with the Children's Television Workshop. Episodes would be watched by children under test conditions and only episodes that maintained their focus 80-90% of the time would be aired. At Creation Theatre this translates into a continual process of evaluation and adaptation after every session we deliver. Any activity which is failing to achieve high engagement levels is refined or removed.

PET CAMEOS

The knock-on benefit of developing creativity in children is continual innovation for us as a team. Achieving engagement within a home environment comes with a whole new world of possibilities. Scavenger hunts, den building, makeshift costumes and puppeteering toys provide children with a way to merge their own world with the world of the story we're looking at each week. And of course, there are many star-turns from pets just as you would expect from any remote learning scenario. Even my angry cat has been known to make a cameo appearance as a noble steed!

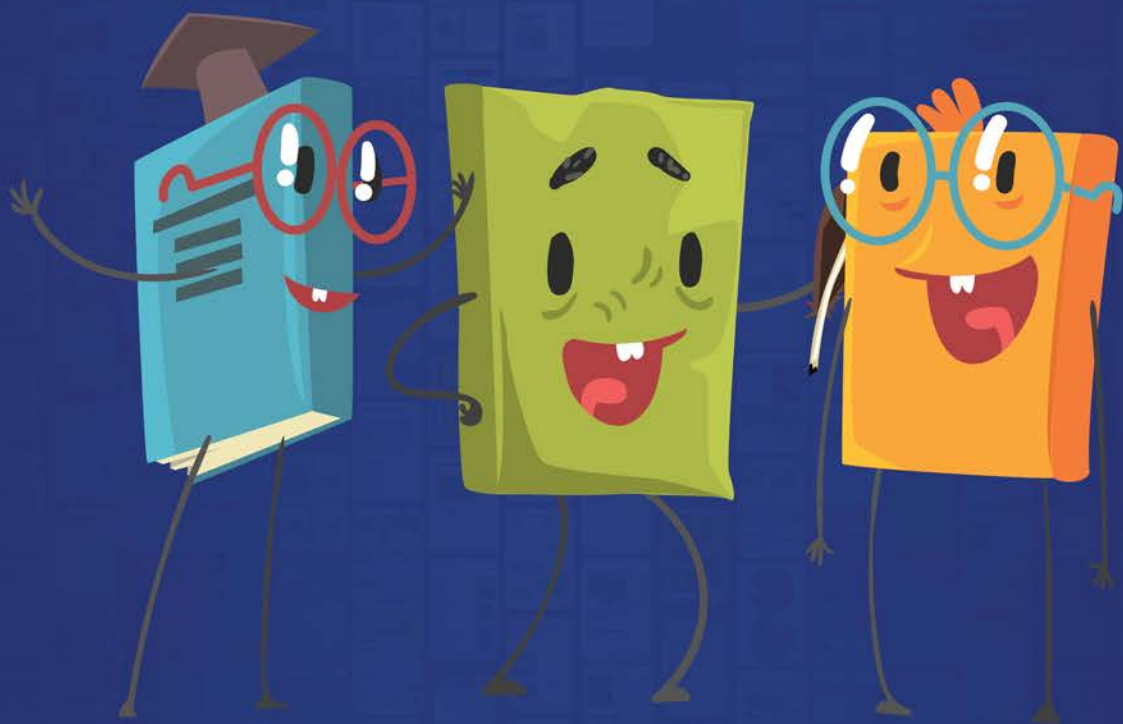


Sarah Headen works part-time as a teacher at Ridgeway CE Primary School in Oxfordshire and is the Education Manager at Creation Theatre.



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Leadership and HR

NEW ADVENTURES IN GOVERNANCE

Governors have adopted practices that should be retained once we return to normality, argues **Steve Barker**

Back in March 2020 none of us could have anticipated the impact the pandemic would have on our lives, on education and on school governance. Almost two years after many governing bodies and trustee boards last met in person it is clear that governance has changed dramatically.

The challenge now facing governing boards and school leaders is to avoid throwing the baby out with the bathwater, by shedding innovative and highly effective practice in a headlong rush back to how it was before the pandemic.

Instead, governors and school leaders need to take stock and ask themselves some fundamental questions about the direction they want to go once the pandemic recedes.

Do we want to go back to a pre-pandemic model of governance? Or should we embrace some of the positive developments made since March 2020 and create a new, more effective model?

A new survey commissioned before the inaugural National School Governors' Awareness Day, which was held on 22 February, showed that governors generally have ridden out the challenges of the pandemic well and that many of the big changes they had to adopt didn't impact on their effectiveness – and may even have improved it.



PRESSURES, CHALLENGES - AND NEW DIRECTIONS

- A National School Governors' Awareness Day survey revealed the challenges faced by school governors during the pandemic and their resilience in the face of huge challenges.
- Although 60% of the 212 surveyed agreed the pandemic had made it harder for governors to fulfil their responsibilities, reflecting the restrictions on visiting schools, 63% said that their effectiveness had not been compromised and 19% said that they were actually more effective.
- Asked to select one or more statements that closely reflected their views of governance during Covid, more than 80% of respondents agreed that virtual meetings had worked well. Almost a quarter of respondents (24.5%) agreed with the statement that attendance at meetings had improved.
- And 60% of those surveyed said they had found it easier to attend training as a result of new ways of operating, with 74% telling us that they had attended three hours or more of training since September 2021.

“We must ensure that we do not lose the gains we have made in governance”

Remote meetings helped to improve attendance at many boards. Governors also reported shorter meetings. This may not be a virtue in itself, but if meeting duration can be cut with little or no negative impact on governor effectiveness then this has to be a bonus. Preparation can help here. My own experience as a governor is that my colleagues are investing time won back from travelling to and from meetings to thoroughly prepare and consider their questions, and this leads to more efficient, more focused meetings.

We've talked about governance structures for years, but the pandemic forced many boards to reflect on the necessity of committees meeting as well as the main board. That's led to many governing bodies switching to a flat structure, with no committees and more regular full governing body meetings every six weeks or so. A key advantage is that all governors are exposed to the full span of governance, rather than operating in committee silos, giving governors a balanced overview of standards of learning, the curriculum and financial efficiency. This often leads to more balanced and therefore effective decision-making.

The need for excellent professional clerking hasn't changed. Clerks help the effectiveness of governing bodies through supporting the chair and headteacher to construct meeting agendas, act as the guardians of governance compliance and provide timely advice and support.

The pandemic has created a pressurised and challenging workload for everyone involved in school leadership and governors have responded well by finding new and efficient ways of working. The challenge now for everyone involved in governance is to ensure that, when the time comes, we don't lose the gains we've made by rushing to embrace the old ways of doing things.



Steve Barker is head of governance services at Strictly Education, which provides professional

support, advice to schools across the country. Presentations and resources from the inaugural National School Governors' Awareness Day are available at tinyurl.com/htgovernance or by contacting hello@schoolgovday.co.uk



Alternative education providers need to meet statutory safeguarding expectations, says **Hannah Glossop**

The number of primary age children in alternative provision (AP) has, according to Ofsted, risen by 27% since 2017; there are now more than 7,000 under-11s in AP placements, including those in state-funded pupil referral units. In that time, the overall number of all pupils in AP has risen by 14% to more than 45,000.

As the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) states: "The cohort of pupils in alternative provision often have complex needs, it is important that governing bodies and proprietors of these settings are aware of the additional risk of harm that their pupils may be vulnerable to."

Alternative provision can be an area where some schools fall down in Ofsted inspections, creating safeguarding risks that then contribute to poor judgements on safeguarding. As one inspection report found: "Leaders have not always undertaken the agreed safeguarding checks when sending pupils to off-site provision. This puts pupils' safety at risk."

The legal requirements set out in KCSIE are clear: "Where a school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, the school continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil and should be satisfied that the provider meets the needs of the pupil" adding "schools should obtain written confirmation from the alternative provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the establishment".

School leaders can take some simple steps to ensure that they are following the statutory requirements on alternative provision:

1 Ensure there is a central list of which pupils are attending AP.

2 Obtain written confirmation from the alternative provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the AP establishment. Keep a record of these confirmations.

3 Check that policies and procedures are in place to monitor attendance of those at AP. What action does the provider take when a child is absent and how do they keep you informed?

4 Conduct regular visits when children are educated off-site and/or attending AP. This gives you the opportunity to check in with the child, see the provider for yourself and meet key staff.

5 Ask for a final report on the child's achievements during the placement, as well as seeking the child's view on the success of the placement. This can help the school decide whether to use that provider in future.

6 Remember that students who attend AP or are educated off-site may be more vulnerable than their peers. Make their safeguarding a top priority.

Alternative provision is growing across the system, with the biggest growth seen in primary schools. Primary school leaders should give their full attention to the risks and responsibilities attached to alternative provision placements – and continue to make their pupils' safety and wellbeing a priority, wherever they are educated.



Hannah Glossop is a former designated safeguarding lead who now heads up Judicium's safeguarding service. Further information is available at judiciumeducation.co.uk/safeguarding-service

Seek support from your governors

They can do much to relieve the pressure on heads during challenging times, says **Neil Collins**

I've sat on school governing boards for years, but it wasn't until the pandemic hit that I took a step back from the role to give my trusted CEO a bit of breathing space in a time of great challenge and uncertainty.

This was a common theme, according to data from GovernorHub, which showed a sudden drop in file uploads in the first few weeks of the pandemic, as school leaders worked on the huge operational challenges that lay ahead.

So, what can we as governors do to alleviate these pressures on our school leaders and provide appropriate support?

Understanding the challenges

At GovernorHub, we recently surveyed 4,000 governors and trustee members to find out how they think their heads and CEOs are doing. It showed more than half (57%) were concerned about the mental health of their headteacher or CEO, and seven in 10 (71%) reported worrying about the mental health of all school staff.

Seventy per cent said they're concerned about the workload of their headteacher or CEO, and 75% reported being concerned about the workload of all school staff.

Eight in 10 of those surveyed said their board was tracking the workload and mental health of the headteacher or CEO, while 86% said they're doing so for all school staff.

One respondent told GovernorHub: "The pressure on leadership teams and school staff has been immense. They have received scant recognition, support or acknowledgement. I fear that there will be many people leaving the profession and know of many who already have."

Strong relationships

It's more important than ever for governors to build a strong and thoughtful working relationship with their school leaders – and to make sure that boards themselves don't add to the high levels of stress and workload.

We recommend chairs keep on top of their regular catch-ups with

headteachers to see how they're doing and make sure they have the support you need. There's a lot of compliance in governance, but the importance of creating strong working relationships should not be understated.

Set a schedule so it happens regularly and decide how you'll communicate – phone, email or video call. But whatever you choose should be tailored to how you work best.

Being sensitive to workload

There are some practical changes that governors themselves can offer to ease workload for headteachers, such as revisiting the time of board meetings. Sometimes a verbal update at a board meeting can save on significant preparation time. We also suggest governors use a short 'KISS' exercise to check in with their school leaders:

- Keep – what's working well for your workload?
- Improve – what workload issues do you have and how could you improve them?
- Stop – what can be stopped permanently or in the short term to assist workload?

- Start – what can you start doing to improve their workload?

Knowing where to find support

Governors should know where to signpost their headteacher for further support, if needed. The local authority might have dedicated support networks for headteachers. If you're in a multi-academy trust, it may have networks or other support mechanisms.

Your board may be able to set up one-to-one confidential meetings for you and an external coach, to help you talk through stress points. Ideally, this person should have past school leadership experience and be external to your school management.

Whole-school wellbeing

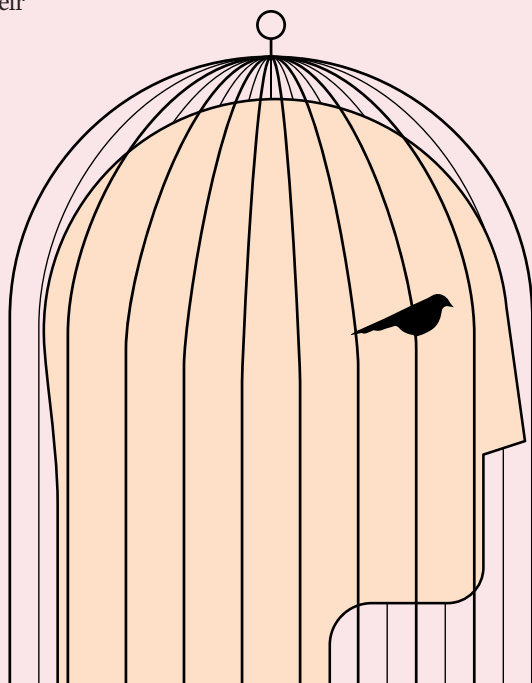
Wellbeing can feel abstract and knowing how to embed a culture of wellbeing can be tricky, especially for boards who must approach the issue strategically, not operationally.

Look to embrace it as part of your school's vision and values. If it's not a key feature already, a good start for boards is to refresh their vision statement in collaboration with senior leaders.

Watch yourselves

It's been a challenging time for governors and trustees too. Ensure the board is working efficiently to protect members from common stressors such as heavy workloads, a lack of purpose and time constraints.

Keep meetings focused and on track, make sure workload is shared equitably and retain a focus on induction and training so every governor has the know-how to function in their role.



Neil Collins is a GovernorHub founder and head of governance at The Key. Please visit

governorhub.com

GETTING STAFF TO DELIVER CPD

A school's own teachers can be the most effective trainers on Inset days, says **Ben Case**

Developing your staff to provide CPD within your school is increasingly popular with primary leaders. Funding has influenced this trend, but more positively there is also recognition that the staff within a school have significant knowledge, experience and expertise which can support colleagues.

The opportunity to provide CPD to colleagues can also develop those who deliver the training, but there needs to be adequate planning, support and time. It's worth remembering that when budget is allocated to pay for external trainers to come into school, careful thought is given to what we want them to cover.

The same consideration is needed for in-house CPD. This isn't about a rushed request for someone to give a presentation in the next staff meeting, this is about using the limited staff directed time outside of the classroom to its full potential. So, what do senior leaders need to consider?

GETTING EVERYONE ON BOARD

It's important that all staff know that the school is going to be investing in a new approach to CPD which will rely much more on in-house expertise. Think about how this will affect teachers, and how to be inclusive of support staff in your CPD provision too.

Get people's views and opinions early on so there is a sense of joint ownership. The SLT may well have a view on who they think should be approached to become 'CPD leaders' within the school but it is better to take a more inclusive approach and invite people to volunteer as well.

WHEN CAN CPD HAPPEN?

Creating enough time for CPD can be challenging beyond the allocated INSET

which is often dedicated to whole school needs. Finding time for focused support for things like improving spelling in upper KS2 or developing new strategies for encouraging reception children to share resources, can be difficult. Whilst, in an ideal world, you want all your staff to be specialists across all areas of the school, the practicalities of that mean this is rarely going to happen.

Staff meetings are a valuable time for CPD, but so often all staff, from across the year groups, are expected to attend the same meetings covering the same CPD topic. If there is a need for KS1 to have a look at phonics, and KS2 to look at grammar then make the most of time and invite the relevant staff to the appropriate meeting.

Quite often an hour for a CPD session is not long enough. Do you have the opportunity to

run a twilight session instead so that things are not rushed, and there is enough time for a topic to be explored by staff?

It's also worth remembering that ECTs have extra time available for their professional development – how can they be involved?

LEARNING TO TEACH ADULTS

Teaching adults, particularly your peers, can feel very different to tackling the challenges of the classroom. Once you've identified who will be the main people delivering CPD in the school it is worthwhile investing in some training to help them develop their skills and confidence as teachers of adults.

Starting with small groups can be a great confidence booster



and worth considering if someone has expressed a worry about speaking in front of all staff. Some people may never feel truly comfortable speaking to their peers, however, being confident in the subject matter can make the difference for many to feel better prepared.

CREATING SPECIALISTS

When we buy in an external trainer we essentially buy the time they have researched, reflected and developed their expertise in a topic; we expect it to be up to date, relevant, and engaging. If staff are to provide CPD of a high quality they too need the time to develop and refine their thinking, research the topic, develop the learning design, and create the resources that will be used in the session.

Access to new research is also important. A good approach is to start developing a staff library of key texts, both classics and the latest thinking. Making sure staff know that you have set aside some of the budget for this can really encourage them to actively

look for books, and other research papers, to add to the library.

There are useful reviews of new research in the Tes and on The Key for School Leaders. The Education Endowment Foundation also has a wealth of easily accessible research from 10 years of investigations. It is worthwhile encouraging those that deliver CPD to share their academic references so that others can also read into the topic further if they wish.

One of the benefits of developing in-house CPD is that examples can be drawn from your own school and this can be particularly engaging. Backing this up with current research helps support staff to understand the reasoning behind the CPD that they are being provided with.

LINKING TEACHERS TOGETHER

As mentioned above, it can be daunting to face your colleagues and deliver a CPD session. Something that can help to

encourage volunteers is to see if colleagues wish to team up together to deliver a training session.

It also means those preparing the training can develop ideas together, share their experiences and co-create training. It can help to draw on a wider range of experience and expertise and create a deeper, more useful experience for the recipients. Working within a carefully selected team can also help spread the workload on carrying out research and preparing to deliver the CPD to others.

PREPARING FOR CHALLENGES

A risk with adopting an in-house CPD approach is that it is easier to postpone or cancel than an external trainer or booked a course. Be realistic about what you think can be achieved, listen to teachers about the pressures on their time.

At times, not everything mentioned above will be possible, but it's important that changes are managed effectively. For instance, last minute cancellations of CPD sessions are going to leave staff feeling under-valued, nor will it motivate them to use precious time to develop future training.

Another issue can be staff feeling that a specific session isn't relevant to them. Ensure the right people are invited to training and don't assume everyone needs to be in a staff meeting. Once the right people are attending, you can also open the session up to others.

If your teaching staff are given the time, resources and support to become true specialists, they will be able to bring more weight to what they are saying to the rest of the staff in their training. It won't just be them talking about their own experience – which might not always be best practice – it will be research informed and aimed at supporting everyone to develop and improve their own teaching.

The use of your own teaching staff to provide high-quality CPD to the rest of your school community benefits everyone, but needs to be done in a way that provides the right tools and environment for this to happen – just as you expect teachers to provide to the children in their class.

“There is recognition that the staff within a school have significant knowledge, experience and expertise which can support colleagues”



Ben Case is Education Advisor for Tapestry and the Foundation Stage Forum. He was previously a primary teacher for more than 10 years.

HALTING THE EXODUS

Headteachers – what are you willing to do to keep your staff? asks **Lara Jeffries**

I asked my personal assistant to ping over the remaining job applications for our teacher vacancies. “Only two have come, through,” I said, “can you send the rest?” “Umm...there *are* only two, Lara,” came the hesitant response.

As a headteacher, my world was full of endless recruitment campaigns and the sense of dread when the next knock on the office door meant another person was leaving, even when it was for lovely reasons like having a baby (five in 18 months – people got busy in lockdown).

Headline upon headline paints a picture of post-pandemic direction changes; people have questioned their existing roles and decided enough is enough. Teacher retention was a big enough issue pre Covid, now school leaders are facing a staffing exodus.

So how do we attract staff into roles and how do we keep them?

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

What is the tipping point for staff? Of course, it is different for each role within the sector, but there are parallels between them. A basic living wage is a good start. Teaching assistants are often on, or close to, national minimum wage. Being a teaching assistant can be hugely rewarding, but it can also be demanding, both emotionally and physically.

There are only so many doughnuts we can put in the staff room to recognise how TAs go above and beyond, daily. Does TA pay recognise the varied challenges and the demands of difficult behaviour? Rewarding teaching assistants with the remuneration they deserve would make the role

competitive in the job market; right now, it is not the most attractive of prospects.

However, school leaders and teacher's pay are, in the main, considered to be fair; £25,714 a year is regarded a decent starting salary with the opportunity to swiftly work up the career ladder. So, why are one in six new teachers walking away within a year?

If it isn't money, then what is the reason? The demands of Covid certainly upped the ante for both teachers and leaders. I sometimes felt like I powered through that first year of Covid, firefighting, moving from day to day and hour to hour not knowing what would come next, just dealing with it. I think a lot of staff in school felt the same way. Once we had a few minutes to breathe we realised it had all

“When asking any member staff to do something, ask yourself ‘how will this help our children to progress?’”



been too much. That, coupled with the day-to-day challenges of being an educator, have tipped people over the edge and led them to look at other career options.

Turning away from a secure career and income is a big choice and a big risk for staff to take. And yet many are doing it. How can that tide change?

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Headteacher colleagues shared their experiences, strategies and despair at the current retention situation.

"I cannot recruit admin staff for love nor money," one told me. "I have failed three times to recruit a SBM and now two times to recruit an office manager. TA recruitment is also almost impossible due to low wages and challenging children. In response, we have various working parties to address staff issues and close governor involvement. I run clinics for staff drop ins, regular surveys and have recently promoted someone as a staff wellbeing lead."

Another said he had considered staff workload, removed bureaucratic paperwork and ensured they could

work from home where possible. He'd also provided mentors, promoted social events, listened to ideas (allowing time for them to be implemented) and, importantly, remembered to say 'thank you' and celebrate successes.

Meanwhile the director of a multi-academy trust told me that the "only way is to work on staff's sense of worth". "Forget extra pay, incentives, free tea, coffee etc – teachers aren't motivated by that stuff and soon forget it."

It's clear that school leaders are fully focused on approaches to attract and retain staff, even in the face of extreme adversity (though I'm not really sure teachers are quick to forget a pay rise!).

FIVE WAYS TO ATTRACT STAFF (AND KEEP THEM)

How can leaders and, ultimately, government shift the direction of travel and avoid the exodus? There are 'big ideas' and then there are the 'quick fixes' - this is a bit of both, and includes strategies that worked for me:

- 1. Time.** If there are opportunities for leaders to give staff more time, then this is the golden ticket in the Wonka bar. In the summer term we gave every teacher an extra afternoon. I did not direct how to use that time, but it was spent in school doing what they needed to do, and I

covered classes. We also set up an afternoon tea for all TAs while senior leaders supported 1:1s in class. Staff felt valued. PPA at home is an easy win; you can get into your pyjamas and that always helps!

- 2. Expectations.** Leaders at every level expect more and more from their team. High expectations are vital in moving a school forward and ensuring children reach their potential. However, we must be realistic. When asking any member of staff to do something, ask yourself, "How will this help our children to progress?" It is amazing how many things can drop off the list when you stop for a second and ask that.
- 3. Be kind.** Empathy is key to staff retention. Listening, even when you know you have a million things on your 'to do' list, is important. For an inset I made every member of staff an aromatherapy relaxing oil and gave it to them in a goody bag. It took time, but it was so worth it. Kindness needs to come from the top and permeate through everything. "Wellbeing" is a word we hear a lot, for good reason; we need to take care of each other.
- 4. Training and opportunities.** I am not talking about the dreaded performance management. I mean specific, considered opportunities to give your team CPD that aligns with your school improvement priorities, whilst also acknowledging the strengths and passions of your staff. Budget does not always need to be a constraint; there are amazing courses and open-source content out there to tap into. Not only will you be making sure your team is equipped with the skills they need, but you also show that you value them.
- 5. Reform at the top.** Education is archaic at points – a Victorian model ripe for change. We need to shift and move and be dynamic in how we teach children, what we teach children, how we structure learning and how schools are managed from the very top down. We must pay staff fairly, but the expectation to increase wages from existing budgets is unrealistic. Buildings are crumbling, IT hardware does not meet need, and SEND needs a serious overhaul. Leaders need to be brave and take these issues up with governors and unions. We can do the little things but it's the big stuff that will make a difference in staff retention and recruitment.

Education should be an exciting and enticing career to pursue, but it is a little broken. It needs love and attention and the focus of government to make some serious changes.



Lara Jeffries is a former headteacher, turned educational consultant

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Should I stay or should I go?

Spare your staff the snarky comments about leaving early if their work is done for the day, says **David Rushby**

We've all been there. It's been a frantic and productive day in the classroom, and now there is only silence.

The teacher takes a moment, before considering what job to do next. But there's nothing urgent outstanding. No books to mark, no planning to do, no meetings to attend.

And it's only 4 o'clock.

Elsewhere, she knows that everyone else is very busy. They must be because they always are.

The day started at 7:20am on-site as always, following a drive through the dark and sleepy streets. With a bowl of cereal in hand, the day's teaching was resourced, tweaked and meticulously prepared.

After a busy first session, playtime flew with barely time for a toilet dash before the whistle went and the daily reading session had begun. Lunchtime was the same.

But now it's "home time" and a radical thought suddenly crosses the teacher's weary mind.

If today's work is done, what is to stop me from leaving?

She knows that she's worked hard, but is she working as hard as everyone else? The sun has been shining outside all

day and she longs to go home.

There's lots of talk about wellbeing and there's no doubt that some time spent at home, sitting in the garden, would help her to feel great. She would also be able to wake up feeling ready and recharged for tomorrow.

She could spend some time calling friends and family, to check in. It's been a tough term so far, with little opportunity to see daylight. Evening meals are usually briefly consumed, not before 7:30, and with the laptop whirring away in the background.

She looks at the door for a moment. It leads directly to the car park. It would take seconds to make her guilt-ridden exit and leave. She puts on her coat and switches off her laptop.

But the accepted practice is that she has to sign out via reception – a process that was made clear as a fire safety protocol. She also knows the unwritten rule, that most staff leave well after 5 o'clock, and the

headteacher knows this, too.

She did once leave early for an appointment. It was a tough time in her

life, when she worried for the first time about her health. As she signed out, one of the ladies in the office joked to her colleague about the fact that she was going home for the day.

If she was to leave early today, what would the headteacher think? What would colleagues say?

This is a situation that can unknowingly occur. It's not that anyone ever told the staff that this is how it had to be, or specified what time when they could leave. But nobody ever encouraged them to go early, either.

It often suits school leaders to see this kind of commitment because this is also what they do, too.

I would have to hold my hand up to say that this is sometimes the way it was in our school in the early days. I never set out for it to be like this – it was something that just happened. Working long-days seemed the only way and it could make leaving school in good time very difficult, because it was all about appearances.

It's important to define your expectations so that the arrangements can be comfortable for everyone. The priority is only ever going to be the outcomes in the classroom.

It is not right to assume that the longest days equal the best pupil outcomes. As the headteacher, if you know that the provision is both good and sustainable in each classroom, then the individual teacher work patterns can be different and should become much less important.

Working late does not guarantee positive short or long-term outcomes and it should never be a badge of honour. And it is well worth remembering that all of this applies to the headteacher, too.



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



DON'T MAKE MENTAL HEALTH A NEGATIVE TERM

Treat emotional problems in staff and pupils as you would physical ones, says **Ben Levinson**

Schools are positive places. In fact, many in the teaching profession have 'positive problem solver' imprinted in their DNA long before the print on their PGCE certificate has dried.

Take the approach to physical health in schools.

As concerns about obesity levels have risen in this country, so too have the number of schools offering constructive ways to address the issue. Healthy cooking sessions, hip hop at lunch times and active lessons – where a teacher might teach the times tables while pupils jump over beanbags – have all been introduced to ensure fewer children suffer the consequences of a poor diet or lack of exercise.

However, when it comes to mental health our approach is often very different. It may be a lack of training or feeling out of our depth when talking about our emotions, but more often than not, concerns are only addressed when a child or member of staff is already suffering considerably.

PREVENT AND PROTECT

Much like we know a trip to the gym, or an early morning run a couple of times a week, will keep our bodies functioning more effectively, we have to take the time to do the same for our emotional health and that of our staff and pupils.

A recent NASUWT survey revealed over 80% of teachers reported an increase in stress during the pandemic, and Young Minds that one in six children have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

But as a senior leader, where can you start to take a more proactive approach to mental wellbeing in school?

Here are a few strategies:

1. Know where you're starting from

Before you even begin trying to implement a positive mental health programme in your school, you have to know exactly where you're starting from.

Public Health England (PHE) and the Department for Education's eight principles outlined in their Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing guidance (tinyurl.com/CYPMHealth), highlight the key areas to concentrate on to create a positive mental health culture.

The principles prompt you to examine whether your curriculum promotes resilience and supports social and emotional learning, whether the student voice is represented, and whether the interventions you already have in place are delivering on expected outcomes.

"This made us rethink our interventions. We now provide more support to the class teacher, so they can take place in class"

This approach helped us reexamine the way we supported children who were falling behind in class. Previously, we would assign the child an intervention teacher who would teach them one-to-one outside of the classroom. But on reflection, we felt that if we looked at the issue from the angle of the overall outcomes for the child, they would feel more comfortable with a teacher who knows them well. They would also be more engaged, less isolated



and ultimately happier if they could stay with their peers.

This made us rethink our interventions and now we provide more support to the class teacher so the interventions can take place in class.

2. Appoint a mental health lead

Children's mental health is something that is only really touched on in teacher training. Bundle that with the fact that, as a nation, we have only recently started talking about mental health and it is fairly obvious that we could all do with brushing up on the skills required to knit positive wellbeing into the fabric of a school.

Appointing a mental health lead and providing them with adequate training is the turning point for many schools.

A member of our team signed up to train with the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools, from Leeds Beckett University's Carnegie School of Education. The government has earmarked funding to increase the number of such mental health leads in schools so take advantage of the grants coming online to upskill your team.

The mental health leads won't replace the work of CAMHS, but they ensure that mental health becomes part of discussions around curriculum or home learning, or many of the other more general issues we have to deal with as a school.

This allows us to work together to spot crunch points so we might agree to deploy teaching assistants differently when a particular year group is managing SATs to take the pressure off teachers or help pupils.

3. Adopt an anti-bias stance

Have you made the mistake of assuming a young teacher doesn't know about old curriculums or isn't confident with behaviour management because they've been in the job for less time than you? That's bias.

When supporting the mental health of staff and students, it's important to adopt an anti-biased approach. You have to see everybody as an equally valued individual and avoid making assumptions of others.

Question your internal, unacknowledged bias as a leader and recognise that it could get in the way of a positive day for mental health. You have to swallow your pride a bit and be aware of how even the briefest of chats can change someone's day for the worse or better.

4. Don't be afraid to do things differently

Excessive assessments can make teachers and pupils feel like a cog in the machine so do not be afraid to do things differently and take a preventative approach to mental health. One of the changes we made

SPOT THE RED FLAGS

Giving individuals the space to get to know each other is essential to establish a safe, trusting space where wellbeing can be talked about openly and where we can spot when someone needs help.

Whether it's noticing the literacy lead has stopped finding the time to go to their beloved weekly theatre group or the EYFS lead has started biting their nails.

This applies to both teachers and pupils.

Teachers often come back from a school trip and say something like, "I had a really good chat with Hema or Zach on the train and I wish I'd had that chat back in September as now I understand them better and it explains some of their behavior in class."

It is important to try to create more opportunities for this type of engagement in school. We've achieved this by not doing book scrutinies, lesson observations, or having a rigid curriculum that staff have to push through at the expense of really knowing those around them.

This nips many stressors in the bud before they happen, both in teachers and pupils. We always say it's not about test results, it's about knowing the students.

at Kensington Primary was to create a new curriculum as we didn't feel the existing one prepared children for the challenges of modern life.

Instead, we put emotional health at the heart of the curriculum from nursery to Year 6 with lessons on everything from friendships to cyber bullying. Improving our mental health has become something we work on every day, just like exercise or eating well.

To be able to change the way mental health is viewed we need to acknowledge that struggle is normal and not a bad thing. With an ethos of support, people are more able to talk openly about what they find hard, so we can support them before it escalates.

"You have to see everybody as an equally valued individual and avoid making assumptions"



Ben Levinson OBE is headteacher at Kensington Primary School

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM

Darren Woollard outlines how a collaborative approach led to reviews of how and what pupils are taught

As part of our Trust's commitment to making a lasting impact for our pupils, we want to ensure we are providing them with the highest-quality education that enables them to be the best they can be. As our Trust has grown recently, we decided to bring our schools together to create a joined-up approach to reviewing each school's curriculum to ensure we are achieving our goal.

A core part of our approach is recognising the strengths in our differences; each school brings a unique perspective to learning and serves a unique community. Our school leaders know what works best for their pupils and have included aspects in their curriculum that are specific to the context of not just their school but to the lives of the children within it.

The point of our work is not to create a Trust curriculum, but to encourage school leaders to think deeper about the impact of their curriculum and how a child's learning should slowly develop and build throughout their school experience.

INITIAL IDEAS FOR REVIEW

We started by asking our schools to designate one of their leaders as a curriculum lead for the project. They attended a course on curriculum design led by Ambition. Following the introduction of the current Ofsted framework, we had already begun working on curriculum development at our schools, but this course inspired us to ask challenging questions, such as: what is the purpose of education?

Moving forward, we wanted to ensure that we were utilising the learning from the course and embedding these more complex ideas into the design of each school's curriculum. Working with the curriculum leads, I mapped out a long-term process that would enable our schools to make lasting changes to their curriculum offer and maximise the impact on pupils.

Despite the challenges, the pandemic also provided opportunities for us to develop the use of tools that allow for ideas to be shared across the Trust, fostering deeper collaboration. School leaders from across the Trust could easily jump on video calls to discuss ideas, contribute to our plans and create and share resources.

THE PROCESS

After some consideration we set five key stages to the process that would take place over a period of two years. There were two important factors that led to this decision.

Firstly, we wanted subject leaders to review their curriculum in detail and offer them stages that built upon findings in a constructive way. Secondly, with the constant pressures of teaching in a pandemic and with



each school having its own priorities, we wanted to give them the time to really consider and work on each stage without losing momentum.

Schools are currently working on the third stage of this process, which is focused on encouraging us to think about the purpose of education. Having a deep understanding of their intent is key to the next stages of the process; it lays the foundations for curriculum design as subject leaders will need to reflect this in their own subject areas. The final two stages of the process are part of the design phase and will be where our teachers use their findings to reflect on and update their curriculums:

1. Learning about cognitive science
2. Cognitive science in practice
3. Purpose of education
4. The habits of curriculum design
5. Developing subject coherence

“When teachers are planning a unit of work, decisions about what to include should be down to the design of the curriculum and not the individual choices or preferences of the teacher”

THE INTENT STAGES

Stages one to three began with ensuring every teacher at every school had an understanding of cognitive science and how it can impact their teaching, thinking particularly about Willingham's simple model of memory.

Cognitive science is understanding how the structure and functions of the brain affect our ability to learn. This includes what sort of teaching and learning strategies are best to help pupils build their schema around a particular subject or concept, and embed their knowledge and understanding into their long-term memory.

This is an important foundation for building an effective curriculum because every aspect should be designed in a way that supports our pupils' learning best. During this stage, we supported our leaders and teachers by providing them with key reading materials and encouraged them to create opportunities to discuss pedagogy in their own schools.

We then asked ourselves questions about the purpose of education and why we educate children, as part of a trust wide network event. Summer Turner's Chartered College article proposes four main schools of thought about the purpose of a school curriculum: to prepare pupils for the workplace, to build character, to further social justice and to teach knowledge for its own intrinsic value (Turner, 2016). This and other stimuli provided rich discussions in each school about what we believe about purpose, and led to schools reflecting on the aims of their curriculum with their own communities.

Our intention is that schools should know why they teach what they teach. When teachers are planning a unit of work, decisions about what to include should be

down to the design of the curriculum and not the individual choices or preferences of the teacher. Neil Almond talks about a box set analogy of curriculum: in series like BBC's *Line of Duty* there is an overarching plot, but each episode in sequence deepens our understanding (Almond, 2020). This is a great way of describing what we are trying to achieve with curriculum, with each lesson building on the last and with challenging end goals in mind. The curriculum needs to provide a sequence so that new learning is built on what has gone before, and takes account of what is still to come.

It is about reiteration, which links to our thinking about cognitive science and the idea that our brains are much more likely to remember when we are revisiting knowledge or concepts often and over time. Our teachers and subject leaders are beginning to discuss how they can create this narrative of learning that weaves throughout a child's whole school experience, and will be working on this with colleagues through subject network groups.

CORE PURPOSE

Throughout any updates and decisions made to the designing of a curriculum, it's imperative that schools have a core purpose. This has played a key part in our success in the process so far, with our Trust's clear vision being a commitment to making a positive difference to society, which is a cornerstone for decisions made about how we educate our pupils. This was echoed in the findings of our intent phase, where a common thread for our teachers is wanting to help each child at every one of our schools thrive.

Whilst we are eager to see how the next stages unfold, we are assured that this work is already having an impact on our pupils' education. Teachers across our Trust are adapting the ways in which they approach the planning and delivery of their lessons, and subject leaders are thinking more deeply about their subjects. Being able to discuss their core purpose as educators, and the impact that subject knowledge can have with other staff across the Trust, has led to the creation of networks focused on sharing ideas and working together to make a difference.



Darren Woollard is Executive Leader at Learning in Harmony Trust.





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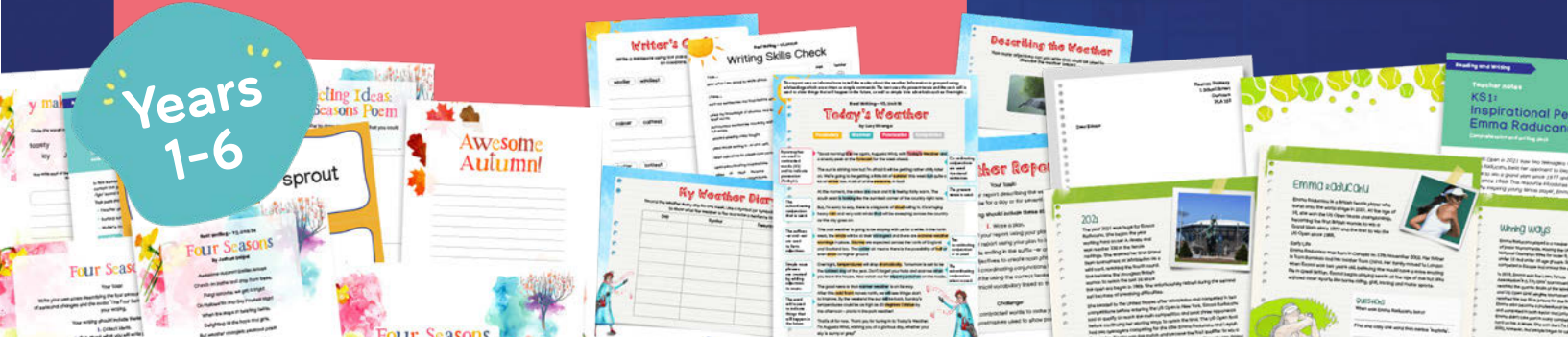


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Somewhere OVER THE RAINBOW

LGBT+ inclusive anti-bullying policies can improve the mental health of all pupils, says **Francesca Cowper**. Here's how to develop one...

Primary education settings are at the heart of tackling anti-LGBT+ behaviours, including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. While many primary schools will have few, if any, pupils who already openly identify as LGBT+ themselves, it is important to remember that statistically a certain percentage of your students will identify as LGBT+ in the future and they deserve to have these parts of themselves validated throughout their lives, not just when in secondary school.

An increasing number of children in schools also have parents, siblings or other relatives who are LGBT+ and they need to see their families represented. Equally, those who are not from LGBT+ families will benefit from learning about and celebrating different types of people who they will inevitably meet in their future lives.

As a former primary school teacher, I am aware of how daunting LGBT+ inclusion can seem. I, like many of my former colleagues, have always been aware of how important this work is, but was often unclear on where to begin. Luckily, there are many ways in which you can support your pupils in their inclusion journey, whatever your starting point. Here are some that I've learned over the years.

FINDING THE WORDS

When I was younger, the word 'gay' was frequently used to refer to things which were bad or uncool. Unfortunately, more than 20 years later this still a regular occurrence in lots of primary schools. I have found that many teachers are unsure how to address it, and I myself sometimes reverted to chiding. While this can seem like the right way to react, in fact it can have some negative consequences.

“If a child uses ‘gay’ in this context and is chastised for doing so, the message they take away is that ‘gay’ is a bad word”

For instance, if a child uses 'gay' in this context and is chastised for doing so, the message they take away is that 'gay' is a bad word. Instead, school policies can encourage staff to explain why using the word gay in this way is not kind, partly by explaining its true meaning. There may be staff who are unclear about what they should or shouldn't say in this context, so it can be useful to have scripts to refer to.

Words such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' are knowingly used in primary schools to be deliberately insulting, too. In my experience, these words are often used hurtfully towards students who in some way differ from the 'norm', usually regarding gender. Sometimes, our own conscious or unconscious stereotypes can lead to this kind of labelling as well. While teaching, I witnessed boys being called 'gay' because they played with what were regarded as 'girls' toys, and girls who got their hair cut short were called 'lesbian'. Remarks such as these stem from limited understanding of gender expression and identity, as well as misunderstandings about gay and lesbian people.

In this case, it is still vital that students are educated about the meanings of these words in a sensitive way. However, tackling this kind of anti-LGBT+ behaviour begins before the actions themselves even occur.



“It’s important to build a school culture where difference and diversity are not only tolerated, but celebrated”

Is your teaching as free of gender stereotyping as possible? If, for example, you talking about careers, why not show a woman as a builder and a man as a dancer? It is also important that in these circumstances children learn there is no one way to look gay or lesbian. One way I have addressed this with pupils is by talking about how we can’t always tell what someone’s personality, career or background is from the clothes they’re wearing. This helps them to understand that appearance is not necessarily linked to sexual orientation or gender identity.

NO-BULLYING ZONE

It is, of course, also important that bullying is met with consequences. An inclusive anti-bullying policy will make it clear that anti-LGBT+ behaviour is hurtful and will be handled in the same way as other bullying in your school.

Sometimes anti-LGBT+ behaviour in primary schools can be directed at a pupil’s family, rather than the student themselves. I had one student who had LGBT+ parents and other children did not always react positively. It was only through discussing LGBT+ diversity that this situation changed, significantly improving the wellbeing of my student and his family. An LGBT+ inclusive anti-bullying policy will make it clear that negative comments about someone’s family can also be a kind of bullying.

Anti-bullying policies sit within the wider landscape of a school and are only one aspect of creating an inclusive space where pupils feel safe to be themselves.

School should also be about sending positive messages. In fact, LGBT+ charity Just Like Us’ research report Growing Up LGBT+ found that positive messaging in schools is linked to pupils having better mental health – including being less likely to contemplate suicide – regardless of whether they’re LGBT+ or not. Therefore, it’s important to build a school culture where difference and diversity are not merely tolerated but celebrated. When this culture is embedded, we tend to see far fewer incidents of anti-LGBT+ bullying.

A fantastic way to do this is through the materials you use in school, including the books you read. Have a look at your book corner: are there any books which feature LGBT+ characters? There are lots of great stories you can include to introduce children to these topics, such as *The Pirate Mums* by Jodie Lancet-Grant. You don’t have to do this exclusively through explicit lessons on LGBT+ issues, either. Bring inclusive materials and discussions into the mix wherever you can, to help avoid ‘othering’ of these identities.

Finally, School Diversity Week, which takes place every June, is also a brilliant opportunity to embed LGBT+ inclusion across the curriculum and celebrate diversity in all its forms. Signing up is free and you’ll get access to a whole host of LGBT+ inclusive primary resources for use across the curriculum.

5 STEPS TO AN LGBT+ INCLUSIVE POLICY



Explicitly include anti-LGBT+ bullying.

Include definitions, for example, of homophobia and transphobia. Do not shy away from naming these things. Make it clear that these behaviours require the same consequences as other forms of bullying.



Make sure your policy includes bullying that focuses on pupils’ families as well as students themselves. Celebrate the many different kinds of families there are throughout the school. Try to read books with LGBT+ families.



Make it clear that bullying based on gender and gender stereotypes is unacceptable.

Challenge gender stereotypes across your school and embed a culture where children are treated the same, regardless of their gender. Make sure that staff, students and parents are on board with this.



Have a clear policy for staff on how to address incidents. This includes making it clear to staff how they should respond to ‘casual’ use of words such as ‘gay’ as an insult. You could develop staff scripts on how to respond in different situations and what language to use, as some staff can feel uncertain about this.



Celebrate diversity throughout your school to embed a culture of LGBT+ inclusivity.

Just Like Us can help you with this – sign up for School Diversity Week to access a wide range of free and inclusive EYFS and primary resources.



Francesca Cowper is a former primary school teacher, and education programmes officer at Just Like Us, the LGBT+ young people’s charity. Follow Just Like Us on Twitter @JustLikeUsUK and learn more at justlikeus.org

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BEING A BLACK PUPIL IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Developing a cultural understanding can ensure the voices and needs of all children are met, says **Amanda Wilson**

Over the last two years there are two key events that we've had to contend with as headteachers which, when we applied for the role, might not have crossed our minds.

The first was the pandemic. The other was the impact the murder of George Floyd had on people all over the world.

As someone from an African Caribbean background, the latter event heralded the start of a long-awaited change. Finally, the issue of race, ethnicity and what it meant to be a black person was brought to the fore and it was ok to talk about my blackness without feeling as if I was looking for sympathy.

Conversations were taking place which had never happened before, and educators were having to reflect on what these issues meant to the children who attended their schools.

USING POPULAR CULTURE

One of the things I did to start the conversation at my school was show the dance Diversity performed on Britain's Got Talent. It was watched by children in Years 2 to 6 and discussed in ways that enabled the children to express their opinions in a safe space.

As leaders we need to ensure we are paving the way to championing cultural representation and appreciation in our schools. If we are not willing to have these conversations, it makes it much harder for our staff to feel free to do so.

Among colleagues, we began having conversations about race and my black members of staff shared their experiences of what it's like to be black in a society where they are viewed as the minority.

White colleagues found it hard to be

believe that experiences, such as being followed around a shop by a security guard because they suspected you were about to steal something, or having to tell their sons not to walk in groups with their friends, were not just urban myths. They didn't think they were things that happened in real life. But they do; and within your schools there may be staff who also have many such experiences to share.

They were conversations that none of us had had before, but we needed to discuss what it is like being black and what that meant. As adults, we felt we had permission to do that, and it was also an opportunity for the children to do so, too.

SEEING COLOUR

We tend to believe that 'children don't see colour', but this isn't strictly true. Black children know they're not white. They know because it's all around them. The books they have in class which have characters with long blonde hair and blue eyes. The dolls in the early years' classrooms are white. The images in the textbooks are mostly of white children. To cap it all off, most of the teaching staff and senior leaders in primary schools are white.

Within the teaching profession, black teachers and senior leaders are still very much in the minority.

According to the 2019 Workforce Census, in the UK 1.1% of all class teachers were black African and 1.1% were black Caribbean. Only 0.2% of headteachers were black African and 0.7% were black Caribbean. To put it in to actual figures, there were 200 black Caribbean headteachers compared to 19,500 who were white.

Even in inner city schools, where the make-up of a school could be 95% black



“Black children know they're not white. They know because it's all around them”

Caribbean or black African, the majority of teachers are still white and middle class and very often have not grown up in the area in which they teach. This may not seem like a big deal. However, when we delve deeper, the question that leaders should be considering is how can a teacher relate to someone with a different ethnicity and cultural identity than their own if they have no clear frame of reference to draw upon?

How prepared is the white teacher who has

“They didn’t think these things happened in real life, but they do. Within your school there may be staff with many such experiences to share”

which didn’t end until 11pm. At which point their parents helped to pack away the chairs so that the hall that their church rents each week is left in a reasonable state.

It’s important for staff to understand the cultural context of the children they teach in order to ensure they’re not putting them at an undue disadvantage.

PARENTAL EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL

Another factor for school leaders to consider is parents’ own experience of school. Many second-generation parents from the West Indies or from Africa would have had a very different school experience, such as much stricter discipline. As such, they sometimes find it difficult to understand why their child behaves a certain way in school and may question the ability of the school to yield what they consider to be an appropriate level of discipline. When they were at school, they wouldn’t have dreamed of talking back to the class teacher or not completing their work to a high standard; the repercussions would be too great.

Providing parents with a clear understanding of how the UK school system works, and building your knowledge of parents’ personal experiences, can help you and your staff to engage with them.

As leaders we need to ensure all children are given opportunities to talk about their cultural identities and to see those cultures represented in a positive way. We cannot allow our lack of understanding of particular cultures and ethnicities prevent us from ensuring all children feel valued, seen and heard.



Amanda Wilson is headteacher of St Alfege with St Peter's CofE Primary school, London.

spent their childhood and teens in an all-white environment, for teaching in an inner-city school where the largest ethnic group may be black African, black Caribbean or Asian.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

As school leaders, we must ensure the teachers we employ are prepared. This includes encouraging them to take the time to learn unfamiliar names. The names of children from some African countries may be more challenging to pronounce than Jenny or Alan, but they’re probably no more difficult to pronounce than Tchaikovsky or Vygotsky. However, for some reason, it is deemed acceptable to shorten or, in some cases, change a child’s name simply because ‘it’s easier’.

In a primary setting, this is often something children just have to accept, because that’s what the teacher has decided. After all, a seven-year-old is hardly going to complain.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

It’s also important to build staff awareness of cultural differences. For example, in some cultures children are not supposed to look their elders in the eye as it’s considered disrespectful. But this is insisted upon in school because otherwise you’re seen as being rude. What a dilemma children find themselves in. Whose rules do they follow? It’s not easy to adapt their behaviour for home and school, but they are often forced to.

Building your staff’s awareness of the impact activities children engage in whilst not in school is another important factor in understanding black culture. When a child is tired or overactive on Monday morning, the assumption shouldn’t be that it’s because they’ve been up all night playing on their iPad. For some black children the reality is that they’ve spent most of Sunday in church, and the second service was a prayer vigil

LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR STAFF WELLBEING

A whole school-strategy for staff wellbeing can reap rewards in teacher retention and student attainment, says **Mark Solomons**

The outlook for the teaching profession is challenging. With stress related ill-health the number one cause of long-term staff absence and second to minor illnesses for short-term absences – not to mention job satisfaction in English schools being one of the lowest globally – it isn't surprising that recruitment targets have been missed since 2012. Currently, a third of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years.

How can we best change that dynamic, improve staff wellbeing and in turn improve pupil outcomes and mental health?

Now is the time to take stock, address the shortcomings in our often 'sticking plaster' approaches and transform school culture with wellbeing built into its foundations.

YOGA AND CAKES AREN'T ENOUGH

Far too often, staff wellbeing is addressed through piecemeal activities to try and show appreciation – a staff wellbeing day, cakes at meetings, yoga and other activities or a quick shout-out to acknowledge participation in a project or some other achievement. One-off activities are easily organised, but with no long-term effect. Once the cake is eaten, the yoga is over and the shout-out forgotten, nothing will have changed for the staff who feel under-valued and over stretched.

There is nothing wrong with any of these, they are just not the place to start. It's like trying to build a house from the roof down on shaky ground. But if you begin with firm and strong foundations – making staff wellbeing an integral part of the school culture – it simply happens each and every day.

TAKING RISKS

Research by behavioural scientist Amy Edmundson, from Harvard University, into factors that increase the performance of people and teams in highly successful organisations found the most important consideration was psychological safety – how safe an individual feels in taking a risk, trying something new and whether this would be acceptable and supported by their managers and peers.

The results of the study illustrated a need for balance between feeling psychologically safe and accountability:

- Low levels of both promote apathy – there isn't a high need to deliver, nothing needs to change. This isn't something we usually see in schools
- Low accountability and high psychological safety is likely to decrease staff effectiveness and motivation – staff remain comfortable
- High accountability and low psychological safety creates high levels of stress as staff feel unsafe and unsupported and with the feeling 'you are only as good as your last set of results'. This is prevalent in some schools
- High accountability and high psychological safety – the most effective combination – it creates the learning or high performance zone. Staff feel supported in trying new approaches, knowing that any initial bumps in the road will be recognised as part of the learning process. The school can develop at pace, staff wellbeing and job satisfaction is likely to be higher. It's a recipe for success.

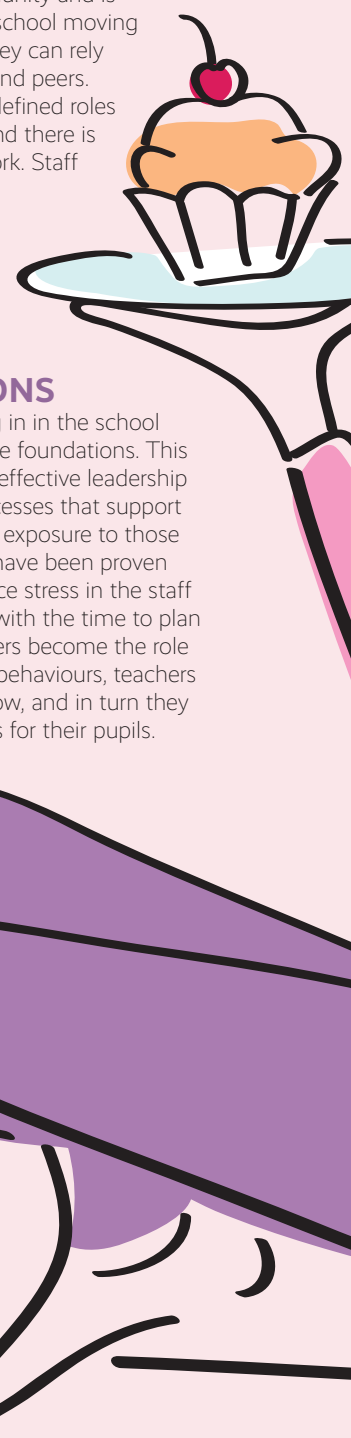
So, making sure the culture is one of high accountability and high psychological safety

is important. If everyone feels part of the school community and is contributing to the school moving forward, staff feel they can rely on their managers and peers. Add to that clearly defined roles and expectations, and there is meaning to their work. Staff will feel like they are making a big difference.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

To embed wellbeing in the school culture, start with the foundations. This means establishing effective leadership behaviours and processes that support them. Leaders need exposure to those competencies that have been proven to prevent and reduce stress in the staff they lead, together with the time to plan and practice. If leaders become the role models for positive behaviours, teachers and all staff will follow, and in turn they become role models for their pupils.

"If everyone feels part of the school community and is contributing to the school moving forward, staff feel they can rely on their managers and peers"



“As with any action taken from the school development plan, it needs to be measured. An evidence-based, anonymous staff survey can provide the initial baseline against which to track future performance”

WELLBEING CHARTER

The DfE's recent Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (tinyurl.com/wellbeingcharter), illustrates greater Government awareness of the impact of staff wellbeing on the effectiveness of schools, colleges and MATs, and the outcomes needed for their students. However, it is voluntary and includes 11 school commitments, some that require significant change without the provision of additional resources.

This may prevent its universal adoption, but it is a step in the right direction towards building a fully professional education sector, fit for the 21st century.

The charter describes wellbeing as: “a state of complete physical and mental health that is characterised by high quality social relationships”.

Looking at the commitments in the charter, three particular points highlight to me the most important considerations for those leading in education:

3. Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage

Teachers taking on leadership roles usually remain responsible for heavy teaching loads. Finding ways to give leaders more time to develop their skills and knowledge, as well as more effective CPD, will mean they are better equipped to lead others. There will be more capacity to carefully consider and plan the needs of staff, how best to support them and as a result reduce the stress many feel and improve their wellbeing and performance.

10. Protect leader wellbeing and mental health (sub-category)

It is interesting it is granted the term sub-category, although at least its importance is recognised. This is a challenge for governors and governing bodies in supporting their senior leaders and for senior leaders in recognising they have to focus on themselves well as others.

11. Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing

School, college and MAT leaders would not dream of adopting a ‘wait and see’ approach to delivering student outcomes and instead robustly measure and track progress to drive improvements and deliver the best results. Should staff wellbeing be treated any differently?

MANAGING RISK

Schools need systems in place to manage the risks of workplace stress and poor wellbeing. The Health and Safety Executives Management Standards provide a useful research-based and independently evaluated framework. The six standards include consideration of workload, levels of autonomy, support from line-managers and peers, promoting positive relationships, understanding roles and responsibilities and managing change.

As with any action taken from within the school development plan, the impact needs to be measured. An evidence-based anonymous staff survey can provide the initial baseline and track future performance – providing scores, benchmarks and additional feedback. When using a third party you may also receive recommended actions.

Good staff wellbeing and a mentally healthy school is a win-win situation, especially as there is evidence that staff working conditions and the school culture have a direct impact on students’ learning and attainment. They also have a direct link to better staff retention, lower recruitment and a reduction in staff absences which reduces the need for supply teachers and maintains continuity of teaching. This all adds up to a reduction in overall financial performance and better student outcomes.

Isn't it time that staff wellbeing is woven into the very foundations of every school and is part of its culture - something that simply happens every day?



Mark Solomons is CEO of the School Wellbeing Accelerator, Welbee (welbee.co.uk)

as

WRITING

Logitech Pen

Balance technology with traditional approaches to get the best out of your pupils



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AT A GLANCE

- Works with any USB-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

Review 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, making it 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 USB-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 secondary school students.

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- ✓ Marries traditional school work with technology
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AT A GLANCE

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- Helps track trends and produce accurate data reports
- Fully compliant with GDPR and the 2018 Data Protection Act

Review by: John Dabell



The business of keeping children safe in education is everyone's business. Schools have a duty to safeguard all pupils, and create a safe learning environment by ensuring that only adults suitable to work with children are employed there.

It's therefore crucial that there be a robust process in place for dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse against students by staff members, supply teachers, volunteers or contractors, in accordance with the government's statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

Schools are expected to have in place a two-tier system when it comes to dealing with safeguarding cases, with allegations either meeting an active harms threshold, or being grouped under 'low level concerns'/'neutral notifications' – but how should you go about recording and managing these?

Enter Confide, by The Safeguarding Company makers of MyConcern – a strategic safeguarding tool intended to help schools handle safeguarding cases professionally and transparently, and respond in ways that will stand up to any subsequent scrutiny.

What Confide enables you to do is chronologically record all aspects of a safeguarding investigation, while keeping all accompanying documents in a secure storage environment and providing users with the facility to

produce accurate data reporting.

Needless to say, the systems schools use to manage safeguarding concerns have to be highly resistant to any form of unauthorised access or tampering. Confide will ensure that your staff feel safe in submitting those reports, while allowing you to restrict access to the system so that any sensitive data gathered is seen only by appropriately authorised personnel.

Any school's safeguarding has to be absolutely watertight. Confide will help ensure that any concerns regarding the adults in your setting are shared promptly with the right people and accurately logged, thus engendering an open, transparent, supportive and respectful culture.

Confide can also go a long way towards helping identify any weaknesses or oversights in your organisation's existing procedures. It's an innovative software solution that ought to be hardwired within a school's culture, where it can play an integral role as part of a safeguarding system that identifies concerns swiftly and accurately, while maintaining confidentiality and security at every step.

Ultimately, Confide is a must-have case management platform for all headteachers, designated safeguarding leads, values guardians and safe guarding champions.

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LEADING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

VERDICT

- ✓ Can help schools improve their strategic and operational safeguarding arrangements, objectives and policies
- ✓ Is able to improve the quality and reliability of a school's accountability process
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- ✓ Helps ensure that children's best interests are protected, while fostering a hostile environment for any potential perpetrators
- ✓ Ensures all concerns are accurately logged and shared with the right people in your setting, making for an open, transparent and respectful culture.

UPGRADE IF...

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8 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 recommend 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](https://www.idxtra.com)



7 TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

The Junior Memory Championship is an exciting annual event for Year 5 and 6 pupils around the UK. In partnership with the Learning Skills Foundation, the JMC gives schools everything they need to explore the science and art of memory techniques. The children discover how to use a variety of proven learning skills to absorb and apply

information of any kind – then compete with others around the country in a series of online tests. Every year, the JMC shows that memory training boosts children's confidence, strengthens their creativity, and increases their eagerness to challenge themselves – in their education and beyond.

Visit [juniormemorychampionship.com](https://www.juniormemorychampionship.com)

Imagining the future of education

Creativity in education is the root of every uniquely human achievement, says **Kate Robinson**

All babies are born with incredible potential. Whether or not they fulfil that potential depends upon a combination of two factors: the circumstances into which they are born, and the education they receive. There are endless articles to be written on each, but for this we will focus on the latter: education.

Before we begin, there are a few terms that are worth defining: “learning,” “education,” “training,” and “school.” Learning is the process of acquiring new skills and understanding. Education is an organised system of learning. Training is a type of education that is focused on learning specific skills. A school is a community of learners. Often these terms are used interchangeably, but it is important to separate them out: children love to learn, they do it naturally; many have a hard time with education, and some have big problems with school.

Children are natural learners. From the minute they are born they constantly soak up information and use it to transform from tiny beings entirely dependent on their parents for their every need into independent and curious children. Curiosity is the most comprehensive learning tool in the first years of life.

Increasingly we are steering children away from their natural learning processes at younger and younger ages. In the past, school began at primary level. Now more and more children enter formal education settings at nursery level or pre-kindergarten. There are many benefits, of course – we are social creatures, and young children often learn many essential skills better in social groups. It also comes with risks, as overly structured extracurricular activities and excess homework are piled on at earlier ages.

Children at this age are like sponges. What they learn in the primary years becomes internalised, it shapes

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who they are. It is therefore imperative that we continuously evaluate the types of environments our younger children are spending so much time in, and to ensure that the systems we have in place have their best interests at heart. Too often we do things in certain ways because we have always done it that way. When it comes to formal systems of education, a lot of the practices we take for granted make sense from an admin perspective, rather than a learning one.

The idea of “subjects” suggests that each stands separate from all the other subjects. Outside of schools we all know this isn’t true – literature and

history endlessly entwined, the arts and mathematics always bounce off one another, and so on. A much more useful concept is that of disciplines. Disciplines are fluid; they constantly collaborate and flow from one to another. They also open the door to interdisciplinary learning – a much more holistic approach that more closely mirrors real life.

Another example is the traditional school schedule. If a business required that its entire workforce stop what it was doing every 40 minutes and focus on something completely new, it would quickly grind to a halt. Everyone would go mad. It seems bizarre then that we inflict this routine on our children. You cannot fit learning into neat, time-allotted slots. Similarly, minimising play and assigning it only to ‘play times’ diminishes one of the most important tools in a child’s repertoire. Play is not only a fundamental part of learning, but also a critical aspect of development and must be incorporated throughout the primary years. This is made possible through interdisciplinary exploration and flexibility within the schedule.

Perhaps the most critical practice we need to change in schools, however, is how we approach creativity. By creating a distinction between ‘creative’ pursuits and ‘academic’ ones we are unnecessarily putting children into boxes. In these formative years, being forced to identify as either creative or not has the potential to close doors that become increasingly difficult to open later on. We must recognise the inherent creativity in all of our children, and ourselves. It begins by putting the humanity back in to education, and by recognising that childhood is not a rehearsal for what comes later, but a sacred and important time of life.



Kate Robinson is a writer, speaker, and cofounder of a number of initiatives dedicated to the legacy of her father, Sir Ken Robinson. *Imagine If...: Creating a Future for Us All* by Ken Robinson and Kate Robinson is out now, Penguin, Paperback, £9.99.

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