

CLEAR THE CLOUDS

WHY YOUR MOOD MATTERS

Parental complaints

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

EDTECH UPGRADES
AT BETT 2023

OPEN THE WAY FOR
SELF-IMPROVING STAFF

CENTRALISE TO MAKE
BIG SAVINGS

HOW TO MAKE
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Welcome

H

aving recently clocked up 32 years of education reporting, I totted up the number of education secretaries I've seen come and go. The total came to exactly 20. It is extraordinary to think that one fifth of them have been in post only since the start of the 2022-23 academic year.



But is it also any wonder, then, that our schools are in a constant state of flux, disruption and uncertainty? Hopefully, the pages of *The Headteacher* offer some support, information and collegiality in such challenging times.

In our regular The Call section, Philippa Whipp describes candidly the challenges faced by her school, Acorn Park, in turning around its fortunes from an Inadequate rating to Good in all aspects of the school's work. There is much to learn from her experiences.

Kate Sarginson encourages schools to consider how inclusive their recruitment policies are, while Stephanie Smith outlines how her school uses EdTech to break down barriers to learning among children with special needs. Staying with the technology theme, don't forget to check out our preview of the BETT Show, which is taking place next month.

Meanwhile, Kamalgita Hughes has some great advice for how to find your own sense of calm and tranquility as a leader, and how this may benefit those around you, while Undercover Headteacher has words of reassurance for those who feel overwhelmed by the pressures of the role.

If you'd like us to feature the excellent work going on in your school, please drop me a line. We are always pleased to publish contributions from heads and senior leaders.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

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This issue's experts



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Tackling poor mental health through the generations

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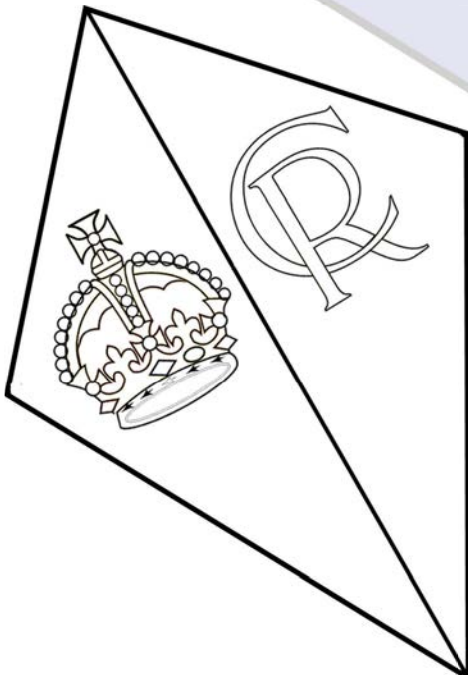
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The number of cases of obesity per year that are estimated to have been avoided in Year 6 girls alone, because of the introduction of the 'sugary drinks tax' in England.

TWEET NOTHING

@loiskitten

We have no union rep at school. I think it's time I volunteered. Is this a good idea?

@justintarte

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@FlexTeachTalent

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PARENT FINES

Woodbank Primary School in Bury, Greater Manchester was reported to be planning to charge parents £5 per half an hour if they were late picking up their children from school. In a message to parents, the school said that late pick-ups made staff late for meetings and the running of clubs, and caused distress to pupils.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

No time to read the news?
Here's your five-minute catch up

Too scared for school

Some 10% of pupils in England have missed school in the last six months because they have felt unsafe, according to The Pupils Safeguarding Review (tinyurl.com/reviewsafety).

The report, based on a poll of 70,000 English schoolchildren aged 7-18, looked at the connection between children feeling safe in school and attendance levels, which have declined since the Covid pandemic. It found pupils were most likely to feel unsafe in corridors and playgrounds, mainly because of other children - though 13% said it was because of

a teacher. Of those who felt unsafe, one-third cited multiple instances but only 25% of those who felt unsafe admitted this to someone at school.

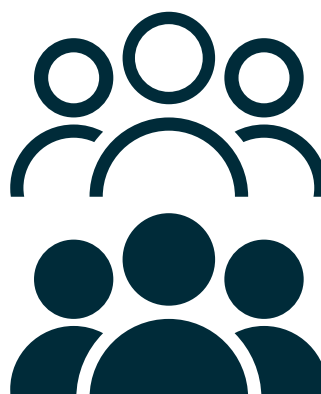
About 85% of primary pupils in Years 3 to 6 said they felt quite or very safe, which declined to 76% with the move to secondary school in year 7. Dame Rachel de Souza, the children's commissioner for England commented:

"It is only through understanding what leads to children feeling unsafe that effective policies and procedures can be implemented."



Social segregation

League tables are causing social segregation in neighbourhoods, according to academics at UCL. They found that that the share of professional and managerial residents increased fastest in local authorities with high-performing schools - but only if those who moved house had school-aged children.



EARLY YEARS

The Education Endowment Foundation has announced it will increase its focus on the early years, and look more closely at how evidence can play a supportive role to the sector. It will release a new suite of resources this month to exemplify key lessons, and fund more trials in existing settings to build up its bank of research on what works.

CPD Diary

STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

February 28th

This course, hosted by the NAHT, aims to bring designated safeguarding teams and safeguarding governors completely up to date with current legislation. Delegates will learn about the key updates within Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and the implications for safeguarding within the inspection framework, including specific advice on implementing the behaviour criteria and supporting the wellbeing agenda. [Tinyurl.com/safecompliance](https://tinyurl.com/safecompliance)

DYSLEXIA

March 21st

Delivered by the NEU, this session will suggest ways of enhancing self-esteem, strengthening executive functions, such as attention, organisation, self-regulation and memory, and utilising specific strategies for reading, writing and spelling. It will be delivered by Julia Rowlandson, a SEND education consultant and trainer. neu.org.uk/national-cpd

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ROSE LUCKIN

Schools need evidence when choosing EdTech

Assessing what works in technology and its impact on teaching and learning will be key for the future of education

Every teacher knows that education is key to improving children's life chances. Poor education amplifies risks in the labour market, with people who have not attained upper secondary education having lower employment prospects, lower earning potential and lower life expectancy. Now, more than ever, we need to leverage educational technology to reach all learners, support new ways of teaching, and enable learning under new conditions.

Therefore, the announcement of the relaunch of the Oak Platform as an Arms Length Body (ALB) on 7th September 2022 and the accompanying award of £43,000,000 of funding could be seen as a good thing for the provision of free online curriculum resources.

The disruption caused during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of online resources and the need for all schools to have access to high quality tools to support pupils' learning. It is estimated that, globally, 94% of education ministries provided at least one form of remote learning involving digital technology during school closures, and the speedy provision of the Oak platform was an important part of the UK's provision. It was a truly collaborative initiative, with many educational technology providers and publishers offering their own content and resources. Many of these commercial organisations also made their products and services available free of charge during the height of lockdown.

However, the reality is that this move by the DfE is unlikely to provide the high-quality support that teachers and learners deserve. There are many challenges in what is being proposed, but I will focus on just two here. Firstly, the importance of teacher choice, autonomy and access to the best possible resources; and secondly the lack of evidence about the potential efficacy and impact of Oak.

For any online platform of resources to be successful, it must be provided in a way that enables and engenders teacher choice and autonomy to select what is most suitable for their pupils. The only way to provide this is to maintain the vibrant educational technology ecosystem that exists within the United Kingdom, and to foster innovation and a diversity of options from which schools can choose. However, the new Oak platform



will make content procured through partners available internationally on a creative commons license, thus acquiring a company's intellectual property and then offering it to everyone for free. This will damage the commercial sector and reduce competition and choice. In addition, the selection of resources for Oak will be driven by 'subject expert panels' on which Ofsted will hold a role. With tight school budgets, it will be increasingly hard for schools to justify paying for commercial resources, when there is a state-owned platform with government-approved resources available for free – even if what is being offered by Oak is not always best suited to pupils' needs.

Evidence is essential. The 2021 OECD Building the Future of Education report made clear that assessing the evidence about technology and its impact on teaching and learning will be vital for the future of education. As an expert with decades of experience in the design and evaluation of educational technology, I agree wholeheartedly. If we are to assure value for money, then we must provide accessible high-quality evidence to schools and parents to help them make the best possible choices. As yet, I have seen no rigorous, convincing evidence that demonstrates the Oak platform would be more effective, or even as effective, as the available alternatives.

Teachers and students deserve the very best. One size does not fit all when it comes to education, and yet that is precisely what the latest Oak initiative is offering. The ALB approach will stifle competition, diminish the commercial sector and in doing so reduce teacher choice and school autonomy. Worse still the offer is unproven and unsupported by any consistent body of research evidence to demonstrate it will be world leading and yield positive impact for pupils. **HT**

We need to leverage EdTech to reach all learners, and support new ways of teaching

ROSE LUCKIN



Rose Luckin is Professor of Learner Centred Design at UCL Knowledge Lab, and founder of Educate Ventures Research.

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LEARN MORE

ALISON KRIEL

Does your school see in stereotypes?

Teaching kids that success looks a certain way can be damaging, says Alison Kriel. Here's what to do instead...

In your vibrant and exciting primary community, are you questioning pervasive stereotypes as much as you could or should? Do you challenge the view of your pupils – and your peers?

None of us in teaching (you'd hope) sets out to limit the options of our learners. Yet, stereotypes persist, often because we're not always conscious of them.

Take our view of white middle-class identities in relation to success. It can seem to be a really positive thing to let pupils from all backgrounds know that they can excel in many different areas. We often suggest that diversity means having non-white lawyers, doctors, business people, architects, and so on. Essentially, that success requires a university education and a high-paying position – preferably one with status. Being too reliant on providing high-ranking jobs as the essence of success can be a problem in and of itself. By selling identities associated with the white middle-class as the ultimate doorways to success, we're denying pupils the opportunity to excel as experts across the whole range of professional fields.

I'm not trying to lay the fault at teachers' feet. More often than not, we're put into boxes from the moment we're born: the colour of our baby clothes, gendered toys, and the perception that certain ethnicities are better at certain subjects. All the while, white, middle-class, male learners are often perceived as being able to turn their hand to anything.

There's even been a lot of conversation recently about narrowing the curriculum, with some schools focusing more on English, maths and science as they feel these will give their students a better chance of success; the ticket to better careers and living happily ever after. But already in today's ever-changing world, that's not the case.

I don't mean to discredit these vital subjects, but prioritising the traditional options over others helps no-one, and stops us from nurturing the versatile, creative spectrum of thinkers that kids can become. In order to allow children from all backgrounds to broaden their ideas of success, we first need to paint these pursuits as worthwhile, and show they can also lead to 'success'.



There is already an appetite for this in schools. In Pearson's recent School Report, teachers wanted to see life skills incorporated into the curriculum with as much time and emphasis as core subjects. They also wanted to develop tolerance of diverse opinions, and social and cultural awareness, as they feel these characteristics will allow learners to thrive in today's world.

As part of this, schools need to expose learners to global perspectives. To show them role models beyond their immediate communities, and beyond the UK too. If the current market is anything to go by, many of our children will be self-employed, and will need to know how to market their unique skills and character on a global scale.

By exposing all pupils to a much broader outlook, and giving them access to a wide range of skills and knowledge, schools can help combat stereotypes that limit pupils now and for the future. You can highlight and celebrate unique talents, show learners that gender or race needn't determine the course of anyone's life, and help them understand that there is more than just a Plan A – Plan B and even C exist too!

Where to start? Introduce pupils to broader careers, as well as broader subjects. Keep school trips varied, and invite as many different people and businesses in to speak as possible. By encouraging learners to explore diverse perspectives on 'success', we introduce them to abundant opportunities.

Accept that you'll make mistakes. Your conversations won't be perfect, and some views will naturally differ. But when everyone aims to be on the same page, across the whole school, educators can truly support all pupils at every level – and deconstruct damaging stereotypes for good. **HT**

Prioritising traditional subjects helps no one, and stops us nurturing the versatile spectrum of thinkers that kids can become

ALISON KRIEL



is an experienced headteacher, and the founder of

Above & Beyond Education. To see what other teachers had to say about diversity and inclusion in education, visit: go.pearson.com/PearsonSR web: aboveandbeyond.education

CHE SOOD

The teacher supply system isn't working

Scotland and Northern Ireland have it sussed – it's time England caught up with its neighbours



I

t is getting harder for schools in England to find quality supply, temporary and part-time staff. It is also expensive and inconsistent. Post-pandemic, schools and MATs

in England are spending more of their budget than ever on supply staffing. It's become painfully clear that the system is broken. There is no cohesive national strategy to support provision in this critical part of the workforce.

Yet just over the border in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, it's easy, affordable and consistently high quality. Here's why...

In both of these countries, supply staff are directly managed and employed by public sector bodies. It's worked this way for a long time – there is no 'market' for supply staff, and there are no private supply agencies. Wales is also transitioning to this model.

School leaders in Scotland and Northern Ireland know exactly where to go to find the supply staff they need, quickly. There is no need to spend time ringing round multiple different agencies, waiting while they try to find available staff. As a school leader you simply log into a cloud based system, post your job and get responses in seconds.

What's more, they never need to spend time and energy negotiating costs or terms, and can rest assured that the supply worker is getting fairly paid every time. This model ensures supply work remains an attractive career choice for staff, represents value for money for schools and is transparently administered.

It also means a non-profit public sector body controls the consistency, quality and vetting of the staff available, helping to ensure that incentives for a high-quality and consistent provision are aligned, and not driven by the pursuit of near-term financial profit.

By some estimates, £500m a year is spent on agency service fees by schools in England (predominantly margins and temp-to-perm fees). A national system can be put in place for a fraction of this cost. This is not an alien concept either – in the NHS, the 42 Integrated Care Boards in England can receive funding to set up local staff banks for direct staff engagement. The total value of this funding pot is around £5m a year.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel to make the direct engagement model work in England. The qualified,

dedicated supply staff are out there, but we have to be sensitive to the fact that wages have been stagnant for 10 or more years, and many may have taken up work in other sectors due to the endemic poor pay and conditions of the agency/outsourced model. We need to entice them back to the education sector.

What can English authorities do to solve the problem for schools?

We know that there is demand for the direct engagement model from workers. We know that there is demand from school leaders for a way of finding supply staff more easily. We therefore need to pool this demand. This will require a clear plan to cover:

- Supply worker pre-engagement and pre-registration
- School/MAT/LA pre-engagement and pre-registration
- Definition of the worker employment model (e.g. who the employer is and what pension schemes are accessible to them)
- Where responsibility for worker compliance sits
- Procurement and configuration of a technology system to operate the model
- Marketing and rollout (likely phased via geographical region)

The successful implementation of the direct engagement model will require a ministerial or similar high-level commitment to give the project the steer required to see it through, just as Wales has recently secured.

As with much across public sector workforce management, it really comes down to a human issue – respect. Let's provide supply teachers – a crucial subsection of the workforce – with a decent way of working. **HT**

There is no national cohesive strategy to support provision in this critical part of the workforce

CHE SOOD



is head of operations at Teacher Booker. Visit

teacherbooker.com

UNDERCOVER HEADTEACHER

Am I good enough to be a school leader?

Self-doubt can be crippling, unshakeable and lead to a general malaise which then clouds our thinking and decisions

I

t's 3:14 am. Your eyes snap open. Your first thought is about the argument that happened between the teacher and LSA that afternoon in front of the class. You don't really know how to deal with

it and lie awake for the rest of the night.

Fast forward to 4:05 pm. "The person hosting the meeting knows you are waiting." The screen springs to life and fills with faces from the local authority, the Trust and different headteachers. You pull up your chair and focus in. The first speaker begins, regaling you with wonderful stories of the impact they are having in their school, the new initiatives their driving, the happiness with which their teachers skip down the corridor and everything they did to get their recent Outstanding judgement.

Your mind starts to drift and you recognise that feeling in your stomach.

I will never be able to do that, I can't be that person.

I am not good enough.

We've all been there at various points in our careers, in and out of school, and as teachers or leaders. I suffer enormously from imposter syndrome as I am sure many of you do, too. The feeling of being out of your depth, the fear of being found out, the constant nag that what you have done hasn't been good enough. It can kick in at any time – when the phone rings, after a parent has had a moan, or when you can tell people aren't happy with a decision, even if you know it is the right thing to do. It can be crippling, unshakeable and lead to a general malaise, which then clouds our thinking and decisions.

So how can we shake this feeling? How can we come to accept that we are doing a good enough job?

It is natural to feel insecure and I can guarantee you will not be the only one feeling it. I remember being a new head and going to a breakfast briefing. I was chatting to the person next to me and I said I felt like I was still winging it, and I'd soon be found out. He looked at me and said, "I'm seven years in and still feel like that." To

find out that an experienced head still had these doubts made me feel a lot better – it wasn't just me being inept. It is hard to know what other headteachers get up to – even working with them as deputies you can still miss a huge amount of what goes on, so there can be little to compare yourself to except the outward picture we see of other people. That outward picture doesn't always ring true, just like social media we get edited highlights, the things people want us to see, or even sometimes the things we choose to see.



**Your school chose you
because of your skills and
your ability to do the
job – take comfort and
be confident in that**

There is a good reason for this feeling, and it is not that you aren't good enough. It's that you care, deeply and profoundly. It is not borne of insecurity or incompetence but of wanting to do the best you can for the pupils. Focus on what you do well. Take a moment to stop and think. Are the children safe? Are they learning? As a starting point delivering those things means you are doing a pretty great job. It takes a mindset shift, and it is not an easy one to make, but we need to be confident in what we do.

Working as a school leader is not an easy job. There are so

many facets of it that tens, hundreds and even thousands of people could not do. The spectrum of knowledge needed to run a school – finance, HR, teaching and learning, safeguarding, legal, and premises just to name a few, without even getting to all the leadership skills that must be honed and displayed daily. Be secure in the knowledge you have and that you know how to use it. Your school chose you because of your skills and your ability to do the job – take comfort and be confident in that.

Are we good enough? Absolutely we are. Even when we don't feel like it, we do an amazing job for the staff and students. Those moments of doubt show we care and want the best. You aren't the head from down the road and that's a good thing because your school doesn't need the head from down the road – they need you. **HT**

The author is a headteacher in England and Tweets at @secretHT1. Go to: secretheadteacher.org

The Ofsted Report

GOOD

Acorn Park Day
and Residential
Autism School
Mill Road
Banham, Norwich
NR16 2HU

 @optionsautism

“We needed to regain parents’ hearts and minds”

Preparations

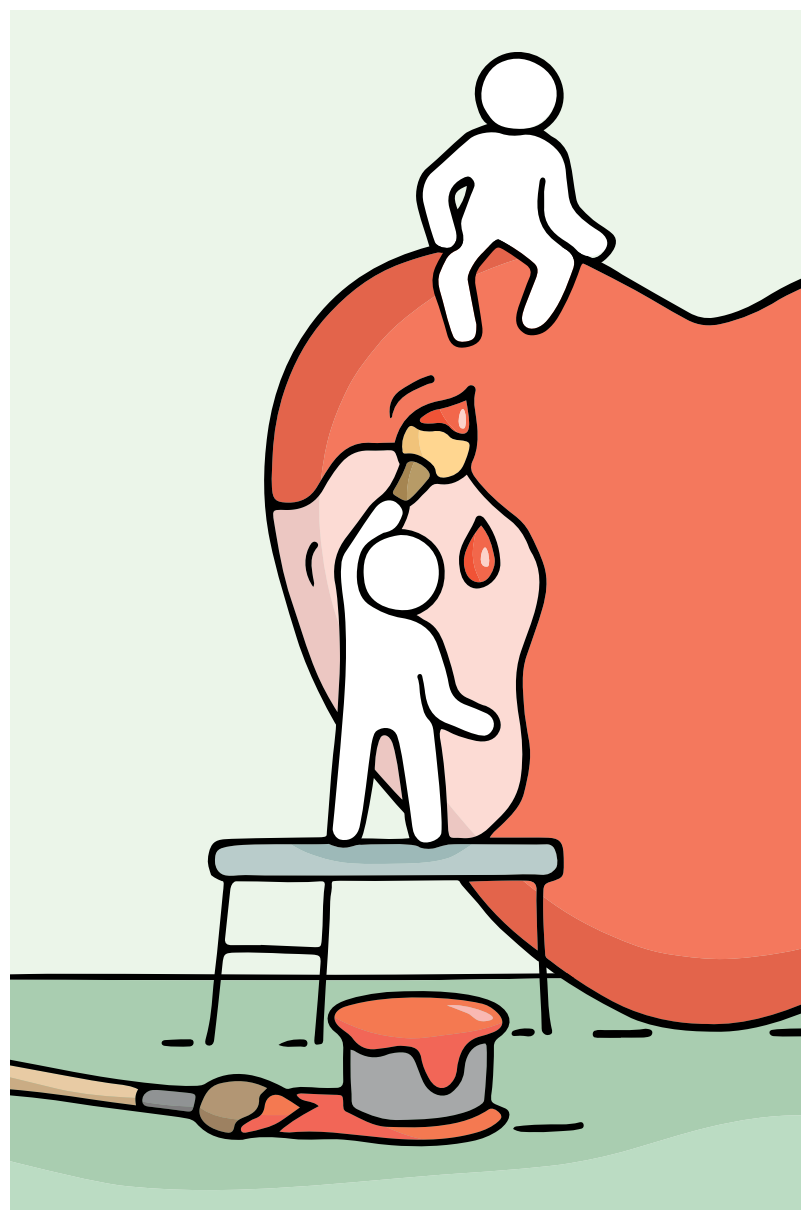
Since the initial inadequate report, we have undergone a complete change of leadership and the school has undergone a rapid period of change. I was on secondment at the school as a Senco during the inspectors’ visit, but have since been appointed headteacher.

I put in place a new leadership team, and the first thing we realised was that the staff didn’t really know what our mission was, or our core values. We created a mission statement and values document and everything else came from that. Our motto was “we care, we share, we grow, we thrive” and within that framework we started to put things right.

Once we had stability in leadership, we hunkered down

with the Ofsted framework and worked through making the necessary changes and gathering the evidence to support our claims. We thought a lot about what our USP should be, and what makes us different to other schools.

As an all-through school for 5- to 19-year-olds, we have very academically able students as well as pupils with complex needs. So, we decided to start with the curriculum. We have two pathways – one that is formal and based on the national curriculum and the other semi-formal, which is more experiential. This might mean working on putting on your coat or shoes, for example. We looked at what children need to know to be as independent as they can be, across all stages and age groups.



When you’ve had an awful Ofsted, you need to regain the hearts and minds of the parents so it was important that information was shared and communication improved with all stakeholders. We ensured parents could see on the website

what children were learning, and gave them ideas for learning at home.

We also looked at our staffing, and the strengths and expertise we had among them, and what further training might be needed. We changed to a model



Acorn Park Day
and Residential
Autism School



PHILIPPA WHIPP
Head of school



Ofsted rating:

Good



Previous
Ofsted rating:

Inadequate



Pupils
on role:

111



Income:

N/A



Outgoing:

N/A



FSM:

29.7%



Pupils
reaching
expected
standards
in reading,
writing
and maths:

NA

Acorn Park Day and Residential Autism School is located in Norfolk. The school was inspected in March 2022 and received a rating of Good, following a rating of Inadequate in 2020. It was judged to be Good in all key inspection criteria.

Our leaders lacked experience in meeting other professionals, but inspectors gave us the opportunity to regroup and try again



that put pupils broadly in year groups, and matched the staff with those groupings. This was a complete overhaul to what we did previously, which was loosely banded groups reflecting predominant learning needs. We introduced a strong programme of CPD that went right back to basics, so that the staff had all the information they needed, without any gaps. In particular, the staff needed to be more knowledgeable about autism. We worked with Ros Blackburn, a consultant who identifies as autistic and had worked with Sigourney Weaver in the film *Snow Cake*. She spoke to the staff about what being autistic means and identified two

key elements. Firstly, be specific in what you want pupils to do. If you hand them a fork in the dining room, then don't assume they will know that you mean them use it to eat. Secondly, she said we had to push children through barriers and have expectations. It's not that they can't do something – they just can't do it yet.

Ofsted's focus

Before the main inspection we had two monitoring visits, which confirmed we were meeting all the leadership standards and that safeguarding was effective. We had created a "swift team" of designated safeguarding leaders, first responders and

family liaison officers trained in de-escalation. The inspectors really seemed to like this model, because it focused not just on the curriculum and outcomes, but on pastoral care and the importance of working with parents. They liked that we respected families as the experts of their own children.

They did a deep dive into English and reading. We had done a lot of work on phonics, especially training all new staff. When we do a full induction, this always includes phonics training.

The initial meeting did not go well. Leaders lacked confidence and experience in meeting other professionals, but the inspectors recognised this and afforded us the opportunity to regroup and try again. Our leaders had done the work, but they struggled to explain it when under pressure. We learnt from this and provided routine opportunities for external review and scrutiny thereafter.

It was challenging at first to get the inspectors to understand the breadth of the school. We were lucky that one of the inspectors was a SEND specialist, but the lead inspector wasn't familiar with provision like ours. There was one incident where the inspector asked why we have Paxton locks, when the children don't seem to need this. But then he went into one of our more complex needs classes and one of the boys approached him and licked his face. At that moment, he understood.

Where we can improve

The main areas of concern were phonics teaching, and our middle leaders structure. The inspectors felt the teaching of reading was not always prioritised, and not all adults emphasised the important words that pupils should learn.

When the new leadership team took over, there were no middle leaders or subject leads. We started from scratch and trained them up. This was part of the staffing restructure and formed a big part of the CPD we delivered. **HT**

BE PREPARED

What Ofsted asked

1 How do you teach phonics?

We have a detailed plan for teaching phonics, with specific training for staff so we were able to talk the inspectors through this. Our English subject lead outlined our curriculum and provided case studies, which was helpful.

2 How do you ensure that reading is taking place across the curriculum?

They observed reading taking place and spoke with students, who confirmed what we said. We also showed them some of the work we were doing, particularly with children who had been weak, but whose reading was improving. The subject lead was satisfied she'd seen evidence of reading and phonics knowledge.

3 How do you know what are your strengths and weaknesses?

You know the answer to this question will inform their decisions about the deep dives, so you need to give it thought in advance. As soon as you leave a chink, Ofsted will be in there asking questions. We knew our English, PHSE and British values were strong, and illustrated our weakness with our semi-formal curriculum, and the fact we don't use many visual resources as a communication tool in English.

4 How do you know that behaviour is good in the school?

We had rewritten the behaviour policy and put in a new reward system based on pupil voice. A one size fits all approach would not work with autistic pupils and so each class interprets the system differently. We saw a transformation in pupils' views, the language used and the positive approach they adopted when asked to respond positively to the challenges experienced.

CREATE THE WEATHER IN YOUR SCHOOL

Finding you own sense of calm could help you be a better leader, and benefit the staff and pupils around you, says **Kamalagita Hughes**



One evening, while teaching a mindfulness course to school staff, I asked them to think about the last time they were involved in a teaching observation. "Notice the different elements of your experience," I suggested.

"Your thoughts, emotions, body posture; your impulses and actions." Their responses varied, but what they shared was how the experience had activated their defences.

This is because our thoughts, emotions and impulses to act – together with our nervous system – are all connected, and stress triggers them.

I noticed something was going on with Susan, one of the teachers. "When you were describing the responses," she said, "I felt I was seeing my own mind." Teaching observations had become a *bête noire* for her, even though she was an experienced teacher and head of department. "I was a mess; I couldn't perform. I would over-plan. I was crippled by stress," she told me. "Thoughts like, *this is going to be a disaster*, made my body tense up and feelings of anxiety flooded through me."

Reacting not responding

Seeing the process depersonalised it for Susan. She knew she wasn't a bad teacher, or incompetent, but when she was triggered these thoughts and feelings took over. She was *reacting* – a knee jerk action based on habit and auto-pilot – rather than *responding*, taking in the whole picture, including herself, and acting with awareness. To stop this happening, she needed to pause – to find a gap.

This is what mindfulness does, and it is no different for school leaders. By bringing awareness to thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, you become more present and can make choices from a clearer state of mind. It's simple, doesn't take long and practising it doesn't require any special conditions.

Creating the weather

Research shows that school staff *create the weather* in the classroom – and leaders do this in the school generally. They have a huge influence on the atmosphere and, in turn, this affects pupils' wellbeing and ability to learn.

If you're stressed or unaware of how what's gone before is impacting on you, that's going to have a direct effect on those around you. Becoming aware in this way makes the difference between you being a calm breeze or whipping up a storm.

"I know I was always quick to react," said Jan, a KS2 teacher. "If there was a problem in the class, I wanted to get it sorted so the children could go back to their work." Practicing mindfulness taught her to take a step back. "Pausing has been really effective.

I thought I was calm before, but I wasn't."

Finding your centre of calm

When I ask school staff about taking care of their wellbeing, they often tell me that they never have time. It's true that schools can be frantic environments, and were even more frantic in the Covid era when there were high levels of staff sickness, student absenteeism and, in some schools, a doubling of child protection cases. But the cost of taking a few minutes to centre yourself to be calmer and more purposeful is repaid many times over.

"It's like a teaching method: slowing down the pace, the voice, everything you're doing," said Jo, a primary school teacher. "It's important to be aware of the effect you have on the children and then notice the effect when you don't do this." In this way, behavioural problems in the classroom are kept in proportion rather than escalating, and cross words with colleagues or parents – that take time to unravel – are less frequent.

There's a bigger picture here. In the everyday grind of school life with its data tables and budget cuts, the enormous privilege of working with young

minds can get squeezed out. Creativity takes space, a sense of freedom and the ability to experiment and take risks. A stressed and tired mind is risk-averse, focused on ticking boxes and surviving the day rather than responding to the joy, ingenuity and humour young minds can bring.

Heeding the lessons of research

MYRIAD (myriadproject.org) was a large-scale randomised control trial looking at the effect of mindfulness in schools. Although aimed at lower Key Stage 3,



In the everyday grind of school life with its data tables and budget cuts, the enormous privilege of working with young minds can get squeezed out

because of its sheer scale (including over 80 schools), it's worth paying attention to the findings as they are important across all sectors.

Even though the mindfulness lessons aimed at children didn't have the effect that was anticipated, the impact of the training on staff was significant. All school staff involved participated in an eight-week mindfulness course tailored to them. The study found that they benefitted from the sessions which could, potentially, then

have a positive impact on students through better teacher-wellbeing, classroom instruction and school climate.

When it comes to mindfulness in schools, we may have been looking through the wrong end of the telescope. By focusing on pupil wellbeing, we've left out a crucial factor, as Willem Kuyten, director of Oxford Mindfulness Centre and principal MYRIAD investigator, said: "Maybe we need to be rethinking the focus of our interventions on creating climates and contexts in which kids feel safe, respected, able to learn."

Connect with yourself to build relationships

Although MYRIAD is the biggest example, smaller studies have shown how mindfulness has supported staff

wellbeing. Mark Greenberg, founding director of the Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, at Penn State, says it's "a good place to start in helping schools become more caring places where children can explore their inner worlds is with the adults".

Susan, mentioned earlier, reflected: "I knew I had it in me to be a really good teacher, but something was stopping me, and I couldn't work out what it was. I realised I was really tense in the lessons and reacting too quickly. I wasn't listening." For her, practicing mindfulness has been powerful and transformative, both personally and professionally.

By their nature, schools are built on relationships. By taking those moments to connect with yourself, you're more open to connecting with others. When everyone takes a breath together, a bit more humanity is breathed back into the school day. **HT**

FINGER BREATHING - A TOOL TO CALM YOURSELF

This is a simple exercise to focus and calm you

- With one finger, trace up one side and down the other of the fingers on the opposite hand.
- When you've finished, loop back round to start again, or swap hands.
- Notice the touch between the contact of the fingers.
- If you like you can, synchronise the breathing. Inhale as you trace up, and exhale as you trace down. But if this feels too artificial, feel free to let the breath come and go.
- Once you've mastered this, you can do it anywhere, like under the desk during a challenging class or meeting. Nobody needs to know you are doing it.

Why this matters

When your head is racing, trying to stop and breathe isn't always effective.

The visceral nature of finger breathing gives the mind something to do. By engaging the senses of sight and touch, our mind is less focused on difficult thoughts and feelings. This gives the mind a breathing space, allowing it to rest. The result of this short and simple practice is that the mind feels refreshed.



Kamalagita Hughes is a qualified teacher and lecturer who has been practising mindfulness for 25 years and teaching it for 15. Her new book *The Mindful Teacher's Handbook: How to step out of busyness and find peace*, is out now (crownhouse.co.uk/the-mindful-teachers-handbook).

JAMES BOWEN

We need energy efficiency plans for schools

Many primary leaders expect their annual bills to more than double by the end of the year, warns James Bowen



Counselor, strategist, social worker, motivator... the list of roles a headteacher has to perform in any given day is almost endless. Now the energy crisis has added a new duty to that list - that of 'money-saving expert'.

An NAHT survey last spring found more than a third of school leaders were predicting a budget deficit by the end of this academic year caused directly by increased energy costs. Soaring bills meant they were having to cut back on teachers, teaching hours and teaching assistants as well as non-educational support and services for children, building maintenance and equipment.

The Energy Bills Relief Scheme, introduced in April last year, protected schools from the very worst of the energy price increase. However, as with all government schemes, there were caveats. The criteria meant not all schools received support, and even those protected from the most extreme rises have faced big increases. We know of primary leaders who are expecting their annual bills to more than double by the end of the financial year, even with government support.

The biggest worry was that it was time-limited and there were no promises it would be extended beyond April 2023. The subsequent turmoil in government and the appointment of a new chancellor added to the anxiety as Jeremy Hunt made it clear that he considered the scheme 'unsustainable'.

Early in the New Year, the government announced what would happen once the current scheme expires in April. The good news is that the replacement, the Energy Bills Discount Scheme, will apply to schools. The bad news is that far fewer schools will be eligible and for those which are, support will be scaled back significantly.

Previously, schools were supported if they were paying more than £75 per unit of gas and £211 for electricity. Under the new scheme, only those billed above £107 per megawatt hour for gas or £302/MWh for electricity will get help. This means there is likely to be a considerable drop in the number of schools receiving support. While the government will point to falling wholesale prices, it seems certain that many schools will face further increases in energy costs in the short

term at least. We urge ministers to continue to closely monitor the impact of energy costs on schools and be prepared to offer additional help where needed.

The extra £2bn announced for schools in the Autumn Statement may ease this pressure. However, schools will almost certainly need to call on this funding to help cover other inflationary pressures, and unfunded staff pay awards. It is a big concern that this additional money simply won't stretch far enough to offset the impact of all those extra costs.

So where does this leave school leaders and how much will they need to be channeling their inner Martin Lewis to find yet further savings when the new scheme kicks in?

The government continues to suggest that schools should seek energy savings where possible and has provided a small capital grant for 2022-23 to help them with this. Of course, this should be explored. Recently published advice from the DfE suggests replacing fluorescent lamps with LED lighting or adding movement sensors. While these are unlikely to lead to massive reductions, to coin a phrase, 'every little helps'.

What is also needed, however, is a long-term strategic plan from government, supported by funding, showing how the entire school estate can be made more energy efficient and carbon neutral - not only through new-builds but also by redeveloping existing schools. Schools have the potential to lead the way when it comes to harnessing renewable energy, but they can't be expected to foot the bill, or to become overnight experts in heat pumps and solar panels. The energy cost crisis and climate emergency must be catalysts for decisive action by government to protect schools and help them become part of a long-term energy solution. **HT**

Heads will need to channel their inner Martin Lewis to find yet further savings when the new scheme kicks in

JAMES BOWEN



is director of policy at school leaders' union

NAHT.

HOW MUCH DOES lesson planning affect workload?

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Planning lessons can be challenging, and as many as 80% of primary teachers admitted to experiencing difficulties with this aspect of their work. A lack of time was the biggest factor, though there are other issues too. One-in-three of even the most experienced teachers said they still needed to plan most of their lessons from scratch, rising to half of newly qualified teachers.

47%

Another reason primary staff find it difficult to plan is finding appropriate resources. 47% of primary teachers spend over an hour a week looking online for teaching materials, compared to just 28% of secondary teachers. It suggests more could be done to support primary teachers in finding, or sharing, resources.



Preparation remains a considerable challenge on staff time in primary schools, Teacher Tapp finds

61%

Many of the least experienced teachers would like better access to good lesson plans or schemes of work. 61% of respondents with less than five years of experience reported needing such support. It isn't as simple as just giving them the schools' curriculum documents though, because 39% of primary teachers didn't consider these to be useful.

HALF OF TEACHERS

Many primary teachers catch up with planning at weekends. Half of respondents said they spent more than an hour planning a lesson over a recent weekend, with 15% spending in excess of three hours. While this remains a sizeable proportion, two years ago the figure was 71% of staff working on planning for an hour or more on a Saturday or Sunday, suggesting there is slow but steady improvement.

COLLABORATION

59% of primary teachers said that more collaborative planning time between colleagues would be beneficial to them. 65% reported that they plan collaboratively with other staff, but just 35% had time specifically allocated for this. Among teachers who do plan collaboratively it is a popular approach, with almost 90% admitting they find it useful.

There have been many reasons cited as causes of the current industrial action. One aspect that has been bubbling along for quite a long time now is workload, an ever-present challenge that never seems to be resolved. As we know, though, "addressing workload" is not as simple as snapping one's fingers. Workload contains many threads that need to be untangled and tackled individually. One of these is lesson planning, and so with the help of data from Teacher Tapp, we're going to look at how these requirements contribute to teachers' workload.



Iain Ford is senior data and reporting analyst at Teacher Tapp. You can take part in and see the result of regular teacher surveys by signing up to the Teacher Tapp app (teachertapp.co.uk)



ASK THE EXPERT

Improving Learning with the IPC

Jacqueline Harmer outlines how the International Curriculum Association works hand-in-hand with the national curriculum in primary schools

The glossary of education reform states "curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program" – is this how the International Curriculum Association defines curriculum?

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) defines four facets to curriculum: the written, which refers to the theory and intent of the curriculum; the planned, which establishes how the written curriculum is implemented in the school context and the conditions the school establishes for improving learning; the experienced, which is the day-to-day lived reality of learners and teachers; and finally, the evaluated curriculum, which requires reflection and engagement with all stakeholders.

If the IPC has its own written curriculum, can it be used alongside the English National Curriculum (ENC)?

Yes, the learning goals in the IPC have been cross-referenced with the ENC, though they are more ambitious in breadth and depth. A pre-developed route plan identifies the best selection of units for coverage of all ENC outcomes. The IPC offers a range of thematic and single subject units that cover science and the foundation subjects. Each IPC unit details tasks that follow a common process to facilitate learning, specifically designed for primary age learners.

What do you think schools should consider when selecting a curriculum that encompasses both a philosophy with teaching and learning?

Schools can answer questions such as the following to evaluate curriculum solutions.

- Does the research basis of the curriculum align with those valued by the school?
- Is the activity design based on research to best suit the age range of the learners?
- Does it make the teachers' job of planning and delivery easier?



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME: Jacqueline Harmer

JOB TITLE: Head of the awarding winning International Primary Curriculum (IPC)

AREA OF EXPERTISE: Curriculum development, assessment & feedback

BEST PART OF MY JOB: Connecting schools with research by making it practical for them

- Is the curriculum flexible and adaptable to meet learner needs and learner interests?
- Does the curriculum meet the outcomes of the required written curriculum?

Why might schools choose the IPC to improve learning?

Schools can create their own route plan. The progressive Learning Goals and detailed units guide, but also inspire, creativity in teachers. Our comprehensive curriculum model goes beyond units. We also provide pedagogical guidance to support policy development. The underpinning educational theory and research, accompanied by the sequenced learning experiences, shape the curriculum intent of International Curriculum schools.

How does the international aspect of the curriculum impact on learners and learning?

We provide opportunities for learners to 'see' themselves in the curriculum, which is a great motivator. International is a subject in IPC where children develop an interest in their own and other cultures and places. Learners engage with local and international communities to become globally competent citizens who take action and contribute positively to the world.

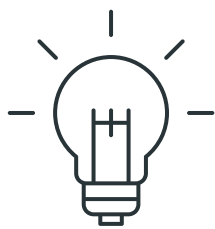
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MYVOICE

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[THE TREND]

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Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. MyVoice – the latest in a range of award-winning solutions from The Safeguarding Company – is an open access reporting system that will empower anyone associated with your community to report safeguarding concerns. MyVoice is quick to set up, simple to use and gives everyone, everywhere a voice for their safeguarding concerns.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

In 2021, following historical claims of sexual abuse in schools, the government tasked Ofsted with carrying out a 'rapid review of sexual abuse' in schools and colleges. The report that followed recommended that all schools "Provide an anonymous reporting system", with due consideration given to the additional challenges and barriers involved with reporting issues concerning children with SEND.

More recently, the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse showed that many institutions lack appropriate policies and procedures. A section of the report, entitled 'I kept trying to tell them', detailed how "Victims and survivors often said that the adults around them failed to notice that they were being sexually abused as a child, despite clear signs." The report also highlighted that 'for some children, incidents are so commonplace that they see no point in reporting them.'

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Following the publication of these reports, the need to give everyone – especially children – a voice has never been more urgent. The Ofsted report highlighted that 79% of girls surveyed said they had experienced some form of sexual assault*.

At The Safeguarding Company, we were saddened to hear of how these issues are affecting children and young people. It's the duty of every society to take care of all children and adults, wherever they live, learn and work. We therefore hope that the recommendations outlined in both reports will result in positive outcomes, and that with the correct reporting systems in place,



children will be able to thrive.

Our bank of free resources can help educate teachers and pupils about what constitutes a safeguarding concern, and how to report them.



Contact:

info@thesafeguardingcompany.com
thesafeguardingcompany.com

WHAT'S NEXT?

In response to these reports' findings and customer demand, we've created MyVoice, a bespoke platform that enables anyone to report a concern quickly, easily, and anonymously. A secure, easily accessible reporting tool will allow schools to carry out early interventions, embed an open safeguarding culture and provide better support for anyone who needs it.

Schools can set their own mandatory and optional fields within reporting forms to ensure that only specific information is recorded. MyVoice can also be made available to anyone in your community without direct access to MyConcern (our award-winning recording and case management software). MyVoice users can therefore include anyone within your network, such as students, parents, volunteers and contractors.

Discover More...

Find out more about how MyVoice can help you create the right safeguarding culture in your establishment by visiting thesafeguardingcompany.com/myvoice. You can also join The Safeguarding Community to connect with other safeguarding leads – for more details, visit thesafeguardingcompany.com/

GET INVOLVED

MyVoice is simple to use, and can be integrated within your school's website or intranet facilities within minutes, thus supporting Ofsted's recommendations for schools to "provide an anonymous reporting system" that's accessible to all.

The option to add custom logos and branding further allows forms to be tailored your organisation or school. See how MyVoice can enhance your pupil recording and safeguarding procedures – thesafeguardingcompany.com/myvoicedemo

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Meeting the requirements of the

NEW NATIONAL PLAN FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

England's second National Plan for Music Education (NPME) was released in June 2022, and will be operational from September 2024 up to 2030. It will require that 'all children and young people receive a high-quality music education in the early years and in schools'.

A list of features for 'excellent provision' are included in the document, but it will be up to subject leads to write a school music development plan that outlines how these will be addressed.

This entire approach, of course, is advisory rather than statutory, so you can choose if and how you make the NPME part of your wider school vision for music. It is likely that you already have a music subject leader who produces an annual plan for developing music, so the logical place to start is by cross-checking your current provision against the content of the NPME.

Expected outcomes

- A stronger and more equitable music offer designed to reach and inspire all your pupils.
- A chance to participate in large-scale regional and national partnerships and projects.
- Access to specialist expertise, and the chance to share your own with other schools.



1. REVIEWING YOUR TIMETABLE

The NPME follows the lead of the Model Music Curriculum (2021) in stating that schools should be teaching curriculum music for at least one hour on a weekly basis at primary level. You know as well as I do, however, that it is impossible to timetable each foundation subject for an hour a week - on top of the additional hours we need for English and maths. There is no magic bullet to fix this problem. Something has to give. When you also consider that the Ofsted Music Subject Research Review (2021) makes a point of stating that music should be taught regularly, not on a carousel, if you're struggling to fit all the foundation subjects in on a weekly basis, I would say you probably want to hedge your bets and prioritise music in your timetable.

Having said that, an hour is a long time for KS1, so you might want to split that down into two 30-minute blocks each week. If you have a weekly singing assembly, it might be tempting to try and count this towards your curriculum time allocation, but this would be a mistake.

Assembly is collective worship and so is not eligible to be included as 'curriculum time'. In any case, singing is only one part of the music curriculum, and cannot be delivered at the level of detail required for each year group in a whole school setting.



2. SPECIALIST OR NON-SPECIALIST DELIVERY?

The NPME sets out an expectation that the curriculum is developed and ideally delivered by a 'specialist', although it does not define what a 'specialist' is. This is unhelpful considering there is no agreed mechanism for conferring music specialist status in the UK. If you can attract a qualified teacher with a music subject specialism then that is one





thing, but these unicorns are few and far between. If you have a bit of money to spend on specialist input, then there are two key places where you can get bang for your buck. One is to have the specialist input in the development of your curriculum rather than in the delivery. This requires a different kind of specialist – an even rarer one who understands how to design and resource a curriculum which can be delivered by generalist teachers – but has the advantage that you end up with a bespoke curriculum that your teachers can then take ownership of, lessening the risk of them becoming deskilled with music over time.

The second point at which specialist input can be really valuable is in the delivery of a whole-class instrumental

programme (which is again a key recommendation in both the NPME and the MMC). Not only will your pupils all get the opportunity to learn an instrument regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, they will learn to read music, which is the one area of the KS2 curriculum that is pretty much impossible for a generalist to teach if they don't read music themselves. But the real added value from these sessions comes from the fact that they are basically free CPD for the class teacher. Where else would you get a weekly programme of demonstration lessons for your teachers to watch and in which they can participate – developing their own musical skills and learning how to lead and develop musical activities? The temptation to use these

programmes as PPA cover is strong, and understandable, but this is a false economy. Over time you can upskill every single teacher in your school for no additional cost, and the resulting improvement to the delivery of the music curriculum as a whole can be astounding.



3. CURRICULUM BREADTH AND AMBITION

The NPME states that your curriculum should be 'at least' equivalent in breadth and ambition to the Model Music Curriculum. You will also want to take into consideration the fact that, according to their subject research review, Ofsted would like to see schools taking a less-is-more approach to music, prioritising incremental development of existing skills over lots of new content. Whilst these various statements from official bodies may seem contradictory, it is possible to have both breadth and depth of learning if we follow a spiral curriculum structure. You may find that placing the interrelated dimensions of music – pitch, duration, dynamic, tempo, timbre, texture and structure – at the heart of your spiral allows you to create depth and breadth by looking at these in the context of a different musical style each time you revisit them. If you're not sure how to begin, and can't access the support of a music curriculum specialist for a bespoke solution, there are a plethora of fully-resourced curriculum packages available from multiple publishers, most of whom will let you try before you buy, so that you can select the one that is the best fit for your school.



4. EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMING

Many of the features of excellent provision from within the NPME lie outside the curriculum altogether.

SUPPORTING YOUR MUSIC LEAD

- It's important to recognise that if you are going to take on board all the aspects recommended in the NPME, your music subject lead is going to be very busy indeed. The document does recognise this and encourages schools to consider how this might be managed without, you will not be surprised to hear, giving any useful practical advice in this regard.
- Assuming that you do not have lots of money to throw at this problem, then you are going to have to come up with some creative solutions for spreading the load and/or creating spare time in your subject leader's timetable. For example, administrative tasks could be delegated to a member of your office team, and set-up for concerts and events to your site team.
- Even little gestures, such as excusing your music lead from playground duty in lieu of the additional extra-curricular activities they're running, can go a long way to helping them manage their workload.



Dr Liz Stafford (@DrLizStafford) is director of global music education consultancy company Music Education Solutions, editor of Primary Music Magazine, and author of The Primary Music Leader's Handbook (HarperCollins).

There are suggestions that each school should provide vocal and instrumental ensembles and lessons, and ensure pupils take part in regular performances. It is for this part of the plan that the support of your local music hub will become invaluable. They can offer a range of large-scale events as performance opportunities for your pupils, and will also be able to connect you with teachers who can offer vocal and instrumental lessons and ensembles. **HT**



Coach your subject leaders

TO BE PART OF A LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

T

here was a time – perhaps there still is – when the subject you were ‘leading’ in school depended on when you arrived and what was left.

But with the refined focus on the consistency and quality of education across the curriculum, leadership in subjects has become more important than ever.

In the current climate, it’s imperative we’re driven to ensure every subject in school offers the very best to our pupils.

And making sure we grow and develop our subject leaders is a key to getting this right.

Growing and empowering teachers – regardless of their level of experience – carries both opportunities and challenges. But amongst a range of strategies I have used as a curriculum leader, some have worked much better than others.

These four methods have proved mutually beneficial both for the whole-school – the staff as well as the pupils – and for individual subject areas.

Key insights

- Our curriculum is global, multi-ethnic and inclusive
- Develop a whole-school ethos for subject leadership to build a community of leaders
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of education in the subject, not the leader



YOU'RE A CARETAKER NOW

Becoming the leader of a subject that you feel passionate about can, and should, be tremendously motivating. It's not without its difficulties, however. We want all our pupils and colleagues to share that bounce and buzz for the subject, but we also need to ensure our approach is aligned with the aims of the school.

It's why, when I support and coach staff on subject leadership, I explain we should think of ourselves as ‘caretakers’. It is our job to ‘take care’ of the subject(s) for which we are responsible: to ensure our pupils receive the very best education and that the subject contributes positively to the overall quality of education in the school. From the outset, we need everybody to see themselves as being part of the big picture.

This message is particularly important to give to those who are being asked to lead subjects in which they lack confidence or enthusiasm. There is a whole-school purpose to subject leadership beyond the perfunctory, and leaders should feel empowered

by their role in it. Crucially, I always remind staff our roles are not for the benefit of Ofsted but an opportunity for us to ensure our pupils get the very best deal in each subject and across school.



A COLLEGIATE CURRICULUM MODEL

To develop a whole-school vision, we need a whole-school voice. That's why we work collaboratively to create and review our ‘features of effective teaching and learning’ in each subject. How often do we get to talk about great teaching in art? Or PE? Or MFL? These conversations are always empowering and refreshing – they remind us of the importance of all our subjects and help us to reflect on our practice.

As part of these conversations



– which we have during an inset day or series of staff meetings – we review guidance from a range of organisations such as The Historical Association or the Association for Science Education to inform our thinking.

Together, as a community of teachers, we discuss, agree and conclude what features we'd hope to see across the teaching of each subject. This gives us a shared vision, so everybody knows what we're aiming for.



**KEEPING
FEEDBACK
FOCUSED**

We should think of ourselves as 'caretakers'. It is our job to take care of the subjects for which we are responsible

With Ofsted's focus on the curriculum, the expectations on subject leaders seem greater now than in the past. I first stepped into a leadership role 14 years ago, without any training, and my style of leadership was very much based on how I had been led. It wasn't until I began the then Leadership Pathways course that I was coached to consider what my style of leadership should be – and how others may receive and respond to this.

If we're going to ask our subject leaders to evaluate the quality of education in their subject then we need to support them to do so.

This is where the 'features of effective teaching' helps. Evaluating against this whole-school vision for each subject keeps the conversation about the subject, and not on the individual. This also helps to define what makes a great geography lesson, as distinct from a great PE lesson. Whilst we know there will be *some* generic features – there will be many differences, too.



**CURRICULUM
CONVERSATIONS**

Holding bi-annual discussions about key areas in each subject has been one of the most effective activities I've introduced as part of this approach. These are conversations, not interviews, about the status of each subject. They support me as overall curriculum leader, but also help the subject lead to reflect and look ahead.

Around two weeks prior to these conversations (for which I allow 45 minutes) I send six question prompts or discussion points I'd like us to discuss. Examples include 'What good practice is happening?' and 'What CPD may we need to provide?'. Points are linked to SIP priorities and have accompanying prompts to help prepare subject leaders; it's not a quiz, test or interview.

Then, together, we discuss each point. By sending the points in advance, subject leaders have already reflected and come prepared. It gives me the chance to gauge their feelings and assess what support I can give them, whilst also helping us to build a whole-school picture.

We always end by RAG-rating the subject: this is absolutely not a judgement about the quality of education. It is, rather, about the extent of 'development' we feel is needed at that stage in the subject. For instance, if an entirely new scheme of work has

WHAT WE LEARNT

- By linking the discussion points from curriculum conversations to priorities in your SIP (such as individual adaptations to subjects for SEND pupils) you are able to assimilate a picture of the status of each subject relative to your overall goals.
- Sending prompts ahead of time will invite staff to come to you in advance of meetings, and ensure the conversations are effective when they happen.
- Encouraging people to see themselves as 'caretakers' empowers staff as leaders of subjects. They may not be an 'expert' in the subject, but they are 'our expert' in how we teach and learn in it. The concept of caretaker and a community approach also encourages everyone to work together and share a vision.
- Once you've established your features of effective teaching, make time annually to review it, ideally before the subsequent academic year. It shouldn't just be a tick list but a shared ethos of practice for your school and pupils. Reviewing it enables everyone to contribute their practice over the year, refresh their thinking and consider new ideas, too.



Adam Jevons-Newman is deputy headteacher at Abbey Hill Primary & Nursery School, Nottingham

been introduced, we would be 'red' because we know CPD needs may be extensive. This in turn helps the SLT focus on what is needed for the whole-school picture. It also enables leaders to talk about their subject in a professional context without the pressure of cold-calling questions. **HT**



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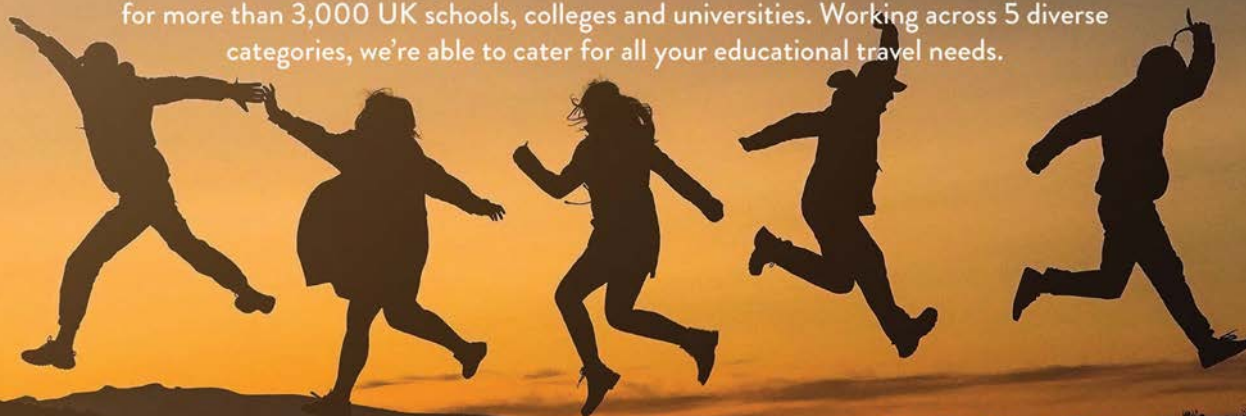
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School Profile

Name:
Kedington Primary School

Headteacher:
Vicky Doherty

Location: Kedington,
Haverhill, Suffolk

Ofsted rating: Good

Size: 211

Extra info: Part of the
Unity Trust



ALEX BEDFORD, CURRICULUM DIRECTOR, AND VICKY DOHERTY, HEADTEACHER

“We built a curriculum that lets teachers work their magic”

Clear guidance, academic rigour, and space for creativity is what makes CUSP the key to Kedington Primary School’s success, finds Charley Rogers





t's a sunny (but very cold!) day in mid-January as I make

my way through semi-rural Suffolk and down a farm track to Kedington Primary School, part of the Unity Trust. I'm here to learn about a curriculum - one that's been built by teachers from the ground up.

I'm met by Alex Bedford, curriculum development director for the Unity Schools Partnership, and co-author of the CUSP (Curriculum with Unity Schools Partnership) curriculum, and Vicky Doherty, headteacher at Kedington, who were both eager to explain how this ambitious project got started.

"It's been clear to me, since my very first day at Unity, that all our schools work incredibly hard," he says. "However, at the time, there wasn't much consistency across the Trust."

The challenge, then, was to find ways to build cohesion and, as it turned out, the solution was close at hand. Alex found inspiration in Unity's research school - one of 28 funded by the EFF. "It's a centre of cognitive neuroscience," he explains, "and when I started this role, I thought we could draw on this expertise to set up a curriculum that could be used in every school within the Trust."

Grounded in research

Using the expertise available on cognitive neuroscience, Alex set about writing an entirely new curriculum - one that would not only provide an outline for what knowledge children should be taught, but that included guidelines for how they should be taught, too. And thus, the CUSP curriculum was born.

"We wanted something that was evidence-led," says Alex, "because there was really nothing out there like that." He began writing a more expansive plan, drawing on cognitive load theory, generative learning practice, and Rosenshine's principles of instruction. But even though the desire was for the curriculum to bring cohesion to Unity, it was never the intention to force it upon schools - they would just need to come up with something better.

"The introduction of the CUSP curriculum was *such* good timing for us," says Vicky Doherty. CUSP is offered to all schools in the Trust, but isn't mandatory, she explains. Despite this, Kedington jumped at the chance to implement it. "We were begging for a Trust approach," says Vicky, "because you just don't have the time, the capacity, or the expertise to devise a high-quality curriculum for every subject and every year group."



LITTLE POCKETS OF MAGIC

A key element of Kedington Primary's provision is supporting the wellbeing of all pupils. When Vicky took over as headteacher, the building was in a bit of disarray, and there was a lot of sorting to do. "I wanted to make sure no corner was left unused," she explains. "There were a lot of storage spaces that were stuffed with things we really didn't need anymore, so I wanted to figure out how we might use them more effectively." One such overstuffed cupboard has now been turned into a relaxing space for any pupil who may become overwhelmed. Kitted out with soothing, coloured lights, comfortable seats, and a monitor playing relaxing underwater scenes, teachers can allocate pupils 10 minutes in the space should they need to decompress, or just have a few moments to themselves to reset. "We all love it!" chuckles Vicky. "Once, even the caretaker said to me that when he was closing up, he spent a few minutes in there." From a junk room to a beautiful, serene space, this is now one of the favourite parts of the school.

The subject leaders at Kedington were working incredibly hard to pull together a curriculum worthy of their pupils, but there just weren't enough hours in the day to get it done. "Our subject leaders didn't have the level of expertise required to build a whole-school system from the ground up," Vicky says. "We knew what we wanted - to see clear progression and the links that children make between their subjects, from year to year - so I turned to Alex for help."

Learn more, do less

Delving into CUSP was a real turning point for the school. "It was fantastic. Not only does CUSP focus on curriculum content, but on pedagogy as well. So by engaging in the model, teachers were able to learn more about excellent teaching, as well as about the content of their subjects."

It takes the load off teachers and pupils, too, says Vicky, while still being

rigorous. "All that back-office stuff is done away with, and you're left with an efficient, high-quality curriculum." By 'back-office stuff', Vicky is referring to the prospect of starting off your curriculum planning with nothing but a set of objectives and a blank piece of paper. "It's something we can all relate to," she says. "I remember when I first started teaching, sitting there and thinking 'How am I going to fit everything in?' Having a model that allows you to add your own flair is a life-saver."

Although CUSP is now used in 350 schools across the globe, with over 100,000 children outside the Trust taking part. "The curriculum evolved from history, geography and science," Alex explains. "It was quickly adopted in this form, and as teachers could see the impact - they had to do less strategy work, and children were retaining more information, and making more robust links between topics - we continued the reach, and worked on covering further subjects." Resources and planning

are now available for vocabulary, reading, writing, and spelling (created in collaboration with Alex's 'pedagogical twin', Lauren Meadows), art and design, DT, French and music.

On the same page

So, what does this pedagogy look like? It's designed to help children retain information, and build their confidence and understanding of each subject year-on-year. "Vocabulary is key part of it," explains Alex. "So, not only do we include tier two and three vocab, but etymology, morphology, idioms and colloquialisms as well. Working with Lauren and Greenfield (Lauren's education company) to build a cohesive vocabulary sequence has been incredibly powerful."

At this point, Alex and Vicky pull out a child's book to show how the curriculum plays out in real terms. This two-page spread is focused on science – a study of vertebrates, to be exact – and includes a wealth of information. It includes an activity where children need to match up a list of attributes (warm blooded; covered in hair or fur; give birth to live offspring) with their related category of vertebrate (mammals). It also has a grid focusing on key terms – this page is vertebrate – surrounded by space to analyse, define, connect, and use the word in context. However, the most interesting elements of the child's exercise book are the central strip outlining the key information required for the topic (in this case, each category of *vertebrate*, and what criteria they meet) and a 'flick back' panel, encouraging the pupil to look back at prior learning (which is all laid out in the same way as this



MEET THE STAFF



**HAYLEY
AHLQUIST**

Deputy head,
English lead,
SENCo, Y1 teacher

Everyone here strives for success. It's a very ambitious school. I've seen massive changes since we introduced CUSP. There's so much more consistency now, as well as improved subject knowledge and routines.



**BETH
MACENZIE**

Y2 teacher

This is my first teaching job, and it's great. CUSP is a shock to the system at first, but the children's work – and mine! – is much higher quality now. Pupils' vocabulary has massively improved, and they are so eager to learn.



**ELLIE
JOLLAND**

Y5 teacher

I've taught Years 1 through 5, and I can really see how the children have progressed. CUSP is great for that. It's improved my subject knowledge, so when I come to teach a unit, looking at the knowledge organiser really helps.



**ISSY
WEAVER**

Y6 teacher

"The children's consistency and retrieval are brilliant. Their helplessness and anxiety have decreased as well, as they now know they can flick back in their books and find information they've already got."

spread) to remind them of what they already know. They are actively encouraged to look back in their books for this information if they don't remember it, too – an important research skill. All these different elements of the book have been cut and glued from a worksheet, meaning children don't have to waste time drawing out grids, or listing instructions and learning objectives – it's all there for them, leaving more time to really engage with the material.

"All schools like to say they have knowledge organisers," says Alex, "but the principle of design is very important to us. Does it communicate key information? Is it just a list? Where are the diagrams? Where is the dual coding? We have enhanced our knowledge organisers by supporting them with our unique knowledge notes." These 'knowledge notes' are points of reference that are clearly articulated, showing the minimum expectation of study. "They start with a learning question that sets children off on a quest," Alex explains. "At the end of the lesson, every pupil responds to the question using what they have learned so far." Teachers can make reasonable adjustments, depending on what their class may need, he explains, but they know that should they just follow this guide, the children will have everything they need. "It's almost like they're creating a textbook for themselves."

I bet you can't remember...

CUSP is a winner for teachers, then. But how do the children feel about it? From my limited experience, their enjoyment of the model was palpable. This was particularly evident during the pupil book study – a process Alex devised to make sure the curriculum is working, without stressing the children out with formal tests. Alex meets with a small group of pupils from a particular class, and questions them on a certain topic. Today, Year 2 were asked about the Great Fire of London. The session felt almost like story time for learning, but with the children at the helm. Alex asked them plenty of specific questions (often phrased as a challenge, which got them really excited – "I bet you can't remember the name of the baker who accidentally started the fire!") and they recalled an astonishing amount, including impressive vocabulary, despite having learned about the fire last term. It was clear, then, that the children have agency in their own learning. They are able to engage with their subjects in a detailed manner, and have the confidence boost of then explaining things to a grown-up.

So, what's next? Although there is an awful lot provided for teachers, there is a lot expected of them, too. This is a rigorous, knowledge-based curriculum, but it works. "Our school has been transformed," says Vicky. "I can tell it's an efficient model from the cover lessons I take. I haven't been in the thick of this curriculum for two years, like my teachers have, but if I step into a classroom and look at a planning sheet, I know exactly what I have to do." The clear phases of the lessons, and the threads that run through subjects (and across them) make CUSP a no-brainer for Vicky and her team. And with more subjects on the horizon, there is plenty more to learn. "We have a map," says Vicky. "We know where we're going. And we couldn't be more excited." **HT**

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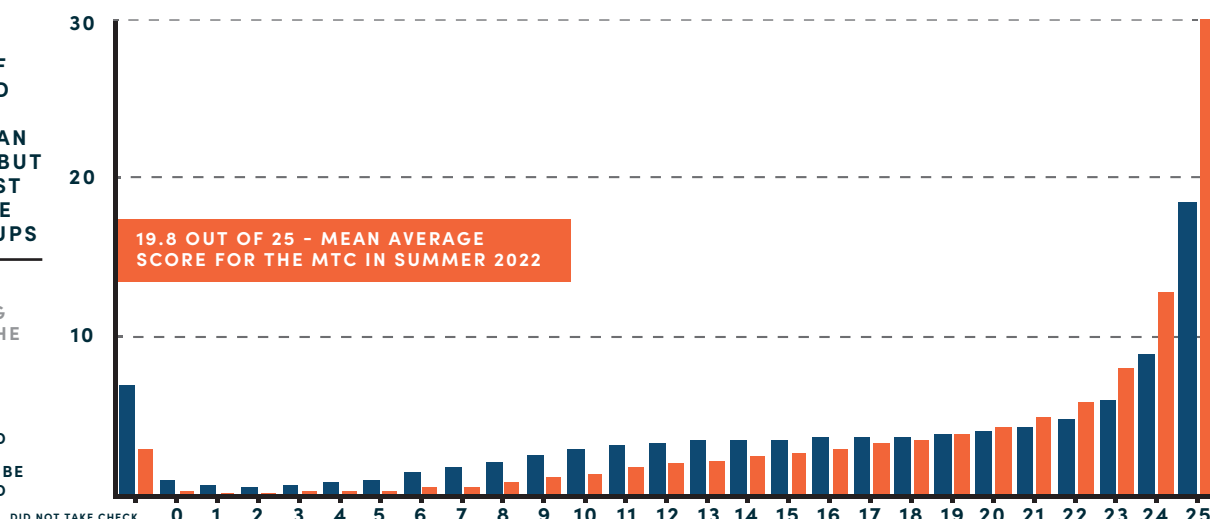


WHAT'S THE *REAL* PURPOSE OF THE TIMES TABLES CHECK?

A SMALLER PROPORTION OF DISADVANTAGED PUPILS SCORED FULL MARKS THAN OTHER PUPILS, BUT IT WAS THE MOST COMMON SCORE FOR BOTH GROUPS

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS ACHIEVING EACH SCORE IN THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES CHECK

■ DISADVANTAGED
■ NOT KNOWN TO BE DISADVANTAGED



The Department for Education's 2017 primary assessment consultation mooted the idea of a multiplication tables check (MTC). Ominously, the question asked was not, 'Do you think there should be a multiplication check?'; it was, 'In what year do you think there should be a multiplication check?'. Evidently it was a done deal.

Originally promoted as a low-stakes assessment, the publication of the assessment framework in 2018 began to tell a different story. The assessment was not intended to be a diagnostic tool. Instead, the data would be used in a number of ways:

- School-level results and individual pupil results would be made available to schools. This would allow them to provide additional support to pupils who require it
- As was the case with the phonics screening check, school-level results would be available to selected users, including Ofsted, via the Analyse School Performance (ASP) data system
- National results would be reported by the Department for Education (DfE) to track standards over time
- National and local authority results would be reported by the DfE to allow schools to benchmark the performance of their pupils

It is perhaps the second bullet point that is most revealing. The phonics check has become a very high-stakes assessment for

schools with results published in Ofsted's Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) and the ASP system. Each school's result is compared to the national average and, if deemed statistically significant, an 'area of interest' will be generated in the IDSR, which will become a line of enquiry for Ofsted. Perhaps predictably, the national distribution of scores from the phonics assessment exhibits a notoriously odd pattern, with a steep incline starting at the pass mark. A fine example of Goodhart's Law in action. The question is: will the MTC suffer the same fate?

Considering it's an online assessment taken under timed conditions, it is less at risk of 'distortion'. And the lack of pass mark should also prevent a spike occurring at a specific score. But the 'desired psychometric properties' section of the framework provides some interesting information on that front: *there is no standard for the MTC beyond the number and percentage of pupils who achieve full marks.* There isn't a pass mark because the unspoken expectation is - unsurprisingly - that all pupils should get every question right.

Scheduled for rollout in 2020 but delayed by the pandemic, the multiplication tables check was finally administered to the first cohort of year 4 pupils in the summer of 2022. Pupils attempted 25 questions on a laptop and were given six seconds to answer each. Schools then received their

results alongside the national data in November 2022, and this gave some interesting headlines.

The national average score was 19.8 and 27% of pupils achieved the maximum mark of 25/25, which was also the most common score. But it was the group level data that is perhaps most revealing. Again, not surprisingly, age was a factor: 23% of August born pupils achieved full marks rising to 31% of September born pupils. Meanwhile, an interesting gap emerged between pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and their peers: 36% of EAL pupils achieved 25/25 compared to 24% of non-EAL pupils. But of most concern is the disadvantaged gap: just 18% of pupils in receipt of pupil premium achieved full marks compared to 30% of other pupils.

The data is yet to make an appearance in the IDSR but it's no doubt in the post and is likely to be analysed - and scrutinised - in the same way as the results of other statutory assessments. It's early days but the signs are that the MTC will take on a similar level of importance as the phonics check.

Watch this space. [HT](#)



James Pembroke is a former data analyst in a local authority school improvement team and co-author of *Dataproof Your School*.

USING EDTECH TO REMOVE BARRIERS

Pupils at Cavendish School are using virtual reality to help them become socially and financially independent, says **Stephanie Smith**

In 2016, there were less than 2000 children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder in Cambridgeshire, now there are over 4000. The idea of The Cavendish School was conceived in 2016 to provide accessible provision for students, aged 8 – 18 years, whose needs cannot be catered for within Cambridgeshire's mainstream state provision. Drawing on our team's experience with autistic students in other settings, and learning from successful pilot schemes in other local authorities, we knew that we would harness the power of technology to support our students from the beginning of their learning journey.

At The Cavendish School, we have seen the positive impact of integrating technology into our students' learning and our classrooms. By doing so in conjunction with a multidisciplinary team of support staff, therapists and families, our students can access education in a way that meets their social, emotional and physical needs.

Using technology to support students with autism may seem counter intuitive because of the possibility of hyperarousal, dysregulation and overstimulation, but implementing technology in educational contexts has been proven to help autistic children to engage with their learning. Technological interventions can help students to develop their social skills and remove

the barriers that co-current conditions, such as dyspraxia and hypermobility, can pose.

Removing physical barriers

Dyspraxia and hypermobility can make the physical action of writing painful for autistic students. Challenges with their fine and gross motor skills can also impact many students' ability to write easily and comfortably. Pain, and discomfort, can divert students' attention from their learning, so supporting the act of writing helps to improve their ability to engage with their learning.

Computer-based interventions are helping educators to create safe, interactive and therapeutic environments that enable neurodivergent students to thrive



From electronic devices to speech-to-text apps, there are multiple ways in which technology can play a role in removing students' physical barriers to learning. When deciding whether the task should be performed by hand or by computer, it is important to assess the learning objective for the student; if the purpose of the task is to demonstrate

activities and actions that our students will face in their daily lives, to ensure they are equipped to thrive outside of the classroom.

Technology can also be used to support students to remain consistently engaged with their learning. Our virtual reality sandpit has proven popular with students because kinaesthetic learning encourages movement, providing sensory feedback that helps them to self-regulate and stay focused. At the school, we have two dedicated sensory rooms that are equipped with virtual reality projectors, which students can access at any time

during their day, for support with self-regulation. Whether this is used to provide them with the stimulation they need to increase their arousal levels, or to assist with self-regulation or to gain proprioceptive

their knowledge then using an electronic device enables students to focus on creating content and share their understanding of a subject. At The Cavendish School, we take a hybrid approach which relates to



A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Our virtual reality sandbox was inspired by a similar piece of technology our business administrator saw while on holiday. It is also important to engage students and their parents in sourcing and sharing potential technological solutions to encourage adoption.

- Be open. Technology might not be designed for the academic world - it might be designed for the workplace - but could have applications to support students' access to learning and developing the skills they need to prepare them for adult life.
- Assess learning objectives. If the purpose of a task is to demonstrate a student's knowledge, then using an electronic device enables them to focus on creating content and sharing their understanding of a subject.
- Consider accessibility. The needs of primary-age children compared to secondary-age children will differ and students will have different digital literacy levels. It is important that the intended user of a device can physically and mentally manage its demands.
- Diarise time for reflection. Understanding where improvements can be made is as important as demonstrating success.
- Be student-led. Many students will enjoy using technology to support their learning - whether this is an iPad, a virtual reality headset, or a robot. However, virtual reality headsets and other tools are as equally fun as they are useful so embrace the dual functions.

feedback, virtual reality plays an important role in our student's education experience.

Engaging with learning

Technology can be used to create an 'irresistible invitation to learn' for autistic students. This is the key principle in Attention Autism, an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, which aims to increase attention, encourage interaction and improve communication. Virtual reality provides interactive simulations of real-world environments, where learners can actively participate, facilitating engagement. Last term, our Year 3 students learnt about the water cycle using virtual reality to interact with the topic and to build their world as a team, which gave their teacher the opportunity to model vocabulary back to them.

Unmet autism needs can result in complex mental

health needs; there are many students with autism who may be unable to engage with classroom learning because of anxiety-based school refusal, the ritualistic behaviour associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder, or a long absence from education. This is particularly evident following the pandemic. After reading a successful trial of robots to bridge the gap between attendance and learning in hub schools, we are now trialling a No Isolation telepresence robot to enable our secondary school aged students, with complex mental health needs, to access and engage with their learning alongside their peers.

Practicing social skills

Virtual reality can also prepare students to feel comfortable in scenarios outside of the classroom and well into adulthood. The Center for Brain Health and the Child Study Center at Yale University's School of Medicine collaborated

on a virtual reality project to help children and young people with autism to achieve social and financial independence. The organisations created role play environments that enabled participants to practise their social skills and prepare for situations, such as job interviews, which can be stressful and anxiety-inducing.

It can be challenging to successfully help autistic students develop coping mechanisms for anxiety when students struggle to imagine visual scenarios. The University of Newcastle created its Blue Room, in conjunction with a virtual reality company, to help alleviate debilitating anxieties by creating personalised scenarios in a controlled environment, so that students learn to manage their fears in the real world - enabling them to attend lessons.

In our experience, virtual reality not only offers students a way to learn to manage their fears but it also helps them to prepare for real-world encounters. One of our goals at the school is to help our students to progress in their chosen

academic or career paths and virtual reality job simulator games, such as Job Simulator, enable our students to experience approximations of real-world job roles to develop the life-skills necessary to thrive in the workplace.

There are more than 160,000 students with autism in schools across England, so it is important that we address the challenges they are facing in mainstream and special needs classrooms. During the pandemic, schools quickly pivoted to delivering learning online, using technology to continue to meet students' needs. Now is the time for schools to assess their current capabilities and invest in the infrastructure needed to break down barriers to learning, deliver improved student outcomes and improve accessibility to education for autistic students moving forward. [HT](#)



Stephanie Smith is head of school at The Cavendish School.

TACKLING THE STEM GENDER GAP

Don't let stereotyping limit the academic and career potential of girls, says **Maria Rossini**

A

few years ago, I read of piece of research that completely changed the focus of my work at the British Science Association. Despite a huge amount of effort and money being put into encouraging girls in STEM

at secondary school, research has suggested that by the time children reach age 10 they have already developed a fairly set idea about whether they aspire to be a scientist. By focusing efforts on girls in secondary school, many well-meaning initiatives were missing the fact that the crucial stage for young people to develop their STEM identity is actually at primary school. It has led to a complete shift in the way my team allocates time, funds and focus.

As educators, we have the power to implement strategies that engage all pupils in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. In order to be effective, these strategies must take a holistic approach, addressing wider factors which often discourage girls from pursuing a career in STEM, such as fewer famous role models and the internalisation of gender stereotypes, as well as giving girls the opportunity to develop and be rewarded for their STEM skills and knowledge.

Challenge stereotypes

International studies suggest a male-centred view of STEM. For example, when researchers asked seven to 11-year-old pupils to draw what they wanted to be when they were older, they found gender stereotypes influenced answers across the board. Boys were four times more likely to want to be an engineer in

comparison to their female counterparts and nearly double the number of boys wanted to become scientists.

Girls were more likely to favour more traditionally feminised STEM careers that involved caring or nurturing roles. They were 2.5 more likely than boys to aspire to becoming doctors, and nearly four times more likely to want to be a vet.

A more diverse STEM workforce will produce a more dynamic, innovative and prosperous environment for everyone

Gender stereotypes that are engrained so deeply at such a young age mean that when these children reach secondary school and beyond, very little changes. In fact, studies both in the UK and USA found "children as young

as six often rule out options for themselves because of the ingrained stereotypical views they have about the jobs people do based on their gender".

It would be unrealistic to suggest schools can completely overcome societal gender biases, as they are so systemic and entrenched that they have a strong influence over even the youngest pupils. However, as a community of educators, we do have the power to make a positive difference in three key ways:

1 Be intentional in your examples

Primary teachers can make sure to highlight the achievements and contributions of a diverse range of scientists of all genders and backgrounds, to help provide a broader understanding of the subject and encourage pupils to pursue science, if this is their passion. There are some excellent examples of diverse role models, such as British Science Week's

2 Link to children's lives and community

Highlight the scientists who are relevant to the lives of the children in your school. Collaborate with local businesses and parents working in STEM and either invite them to speak with students or organise a school trip to bring the industry to life for pupils.

3 Reflect and challenge

Challenge stereotypes the way that you would any other misconception in the classroom and reflect on your own internal biases as you plan and teach.

Get practical

It is important for schools to give all young people the opportunities to develop their STEM skills, understanding and





EMPOWERING GIRLS IN STEM

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSIONS

If we avoid addressing stereotypes in STEM, it can be a barrier to girls taking an interest in science and maths related subjects. By creating a safe discussion space where pupils of all genders can question and critically analyse false stereotypes, as well as express their own thoughts and feelings on the topic, it opens the way to challenging any ingrained feelings about who can and cannot do STEM subjects.

BE A MENTOR AND ROLE MODEL

It is incredibly important when tackling gender stereotypes to be inclusive when featuring the work of scientists in pupils' learning. Through initiatives like the British Science Association's #smashingstereotypes campaign - which features a collection of over 30 stories from individuals and teams demonstrating how science is for everyone - teachers can help encourage all young people, of all genders and backgrounds, to see themselves as scientists. In addition to including examples of female scientists during lessons, providing girls with a real-life STEM role model can have a huge impact on the development of their interest and confidence in the subject. Whether it be a female science teacher, a member of the local community or even senior pupils from neighbouring schools, a science mentor can provide essential guidance and help answer any questions that students may have about careers in STEM or their lessons, as well as supporting them to lead their own investigatory science projects.

passions - especially those who may feel less able to develop this interest outside of school, including girls.

Project-based work can help achieve this, as this form of learning encourages pupils to investigate their interests just as a real scientist would. When children are given the opportunity to explore an area of STEM which interests them most - a project where they can prove what they can do and understand how they can contribute to the field - they can thrive in their own unique way. This process can help affirm the skills and achievements and boost the confidence of all pupils. We see this happen across the UK in schools which offer our CREST Awards, which are taken up equally by male and female pupils

who want to demonstrate their passion for science.

Make it relevant

Making links between science and children's real lives is important. This can be achieved through eliciting and valuing children's experience within the classroom or signposting opportunities to explore STEM at home or in the community. It helps normalise engagement with STEM, and applying scientific knowledge to different circumstances enhances learning.

Engaging communities and parents can be challenging at times, but we've seen brilliant examples of schools using British Science Week or CREST Award activities as a focus for home or community learning.

If girls are supported to explore their interest in STEM, and celebrated as scientists in the classroom and at home, they will be equipped with far more tools to help them overcome the hurdles which might discourage them from pursuing the subject.

Know your strengths

Primary teachers hold powerful keys to unlocking girls' STEM passions. Central to this is acknowledging the barriers which may discourage some from fulfilling their potential, such as gendered stereotypes which influence all pupils. Once these have been acknowledged, they can be addressed through actively challenging stereotypes and providing relevant, practical and personal STEM teaching and experiences.

All pupils deserve a world in which everyone can thrive in science. So too does the science industry as a whole - and the first step to achieving this is in primary schools. [HT](#)



Maria Rossini is head of education at the British Science Association

SPARKING A WHOLE-SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Lisa Dale describes how enrolment on a DfE training programme led to a dramatic decrease in reported behaviour incidents

In line with findings from the Education Endowment Foundation on the impact of Covid, it quickly became apparent in our school that the pandemic had taken a toll on the mental health of many of our pupils, parents and carers.

As children returned post-lockdown, we noticed they were less resilient when presented with challenging tasks and did not persevere in lessons as often as before. The general lack of focus made it increasingly difficult for staff, and for me, to manage behaviour due to an acute feeling of restlessness in the classrooms. We decided we urgently needed to undergo a transformation when it came to managing discipline and pupil conduct.

Searching for expert help

Our first step towards this was to deepen our understanding of growth mindset and in particular the work of professor Guy Claxton and his extensive research on how young people can become better learners.

His work lays out four main learning dispositions (resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity) and while it

was first published some time ago, I still found it eye opening and believed we could tweak his theories to suit our needs and begin a transformation of our behaviour culture. The problem was we weren't entirely sure how best to take this forward.

I then discovered the Department for Education had launched the Behaviour Hub programme, as part of a £10 million initiative designed to support a culture of good behaviour, routines and structure in schools. As our focus was to reduce the impact of disruptive behaviour and to increase learning time for the children, I signed up Howbridge for the programme.

Achieving clarity

The programme helped us gain clarity as to what we wanted from our new behaviour culture, and the challenges we needed to overcome to get results. I wanted to

focus on the relationships between teachers and children, and it quickly became clear this would require a very personalised approach.

Topics covered by the Behaviour Hub - such as prevention and de-escalation strategies and consistent language frameworks - changed how staff and I responded to disruptive behaviours. If you were to visit our school now, you might notice the mini scripts staff have attached to their lanyards, which outline expected language, and the steps they are expected to follow when addressing specific behaviour scenarios.

For example, the restorative conversations between teachers and pupils follow four steps. First the pupil is given the chance to openly share what they believe to have happened. Then they are encouraged to explore the impact of their actions, before talking through how they might improve their behaviour and re-establish respect in the classroom. Since introducing the

mini scripts, we've noticed that pupils respond to the consistent language we use and have a better understanding of what is expected from them.

gain support from all quarters, but the vision I have is slowly coming to fruition. We are making progress and staff now feel more empowered.

Staff have mini scripts attached to lanyards outlining expected language and the steps to follow when addressing certain behaviours

Smoothing transitions

One of the strategies we started using for children who struggle to transition from break and lunchtimes to the classroom was to assign a key adult from the school to collect them from the playground and help them settle down before returning to lessons. It was prevention strategies such as this that helped us establish clarity on the practical steps we could take to tackle disruptive behaviours.

The effort to ensure consistency in our communication with all pupils continues, even after the training. There are challenges in getting every member of staff on board with a new whole-school behaviour culture, and it has taken longer than expected to

Working with lead schools

Alongside professional training the Department of Education introduced us and other participants to a Lead School, which was further along in its behaviour culture journey. A team from Howbridge, including me, went to visit so we could observe its strategies in context and see how implementation was a gradual process. It was incredibly useful as, although before this networking event we had some seeds of ideas on what we wanted our behaviour process to look like, seeing practical solutions in action helped us build a picture of how these could be modified to fit our needs.

The same Lead School later hosted a workshop at Howbridge on the benefits of a growth mindset and how it can encourage self-belief, help you focus on opportunities and give you the confidence to utilise feedback.

Embedding new behaviours

After the training, we started drafting our new behaviour policies, so we could be confident our processes reflected our growth and what we had learnt from the Behaviour Hub programme. Our improvement plan focuses heavily on maximising learning time for all children, which was one of our long-term goals when we signed up for the initiative.

Since the training, we have seen marked improvements. Although we are in the early days of monitoring behaviour management in classrooms, we recently compared results from November 2021 and November 2022 and reported behaviour incidents have decreased from 86 to 35.

These are very promising results! **HT**



Lisa Dale is headteacher of Howbridge Church of England Junior School. For further information, visit the Education Endowment Foundation website ([educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)).

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR BEHAVIOUR CULTURE

1. Retrieval is a rich and complex element of learning. When planned and delivered intentionally it can create a solid base on which to build new learning.
2. Don't be afraid to accept help! Changing something as big as an entire behaviour culture can be overwhelming. You are more likely to reach your goals if you allow experts to guide you.
3. Pinpoint what it is you want to change. Is it maximising learning time for the children? Or is it improving behaviour during break times? Keep this specific focus in mind.
4. Not everybody will share your vision straight away. Change is difficult, not just for children but for staff members too. It may take a while to secure the confidence of your entire workforce when it comes to changing processes and rewriting behavioural policies. Don't let hesitation dissuade you from making the changes.
5. Establish long-term and short-term goals. Having some clarity on what is a quick fix and what is likely to take longer to change can help with motivation. If your short-term goals are coming to fruition and you can see the difference in behaviour, you're more likely to feel motivated to go for the long-term goals.
6. Keep parents in the loop, but don't feel obliged to include them in every single update. Changing an entire behavioural process is a shift in culture, not an overnight fix.

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Cost savings over 5 years

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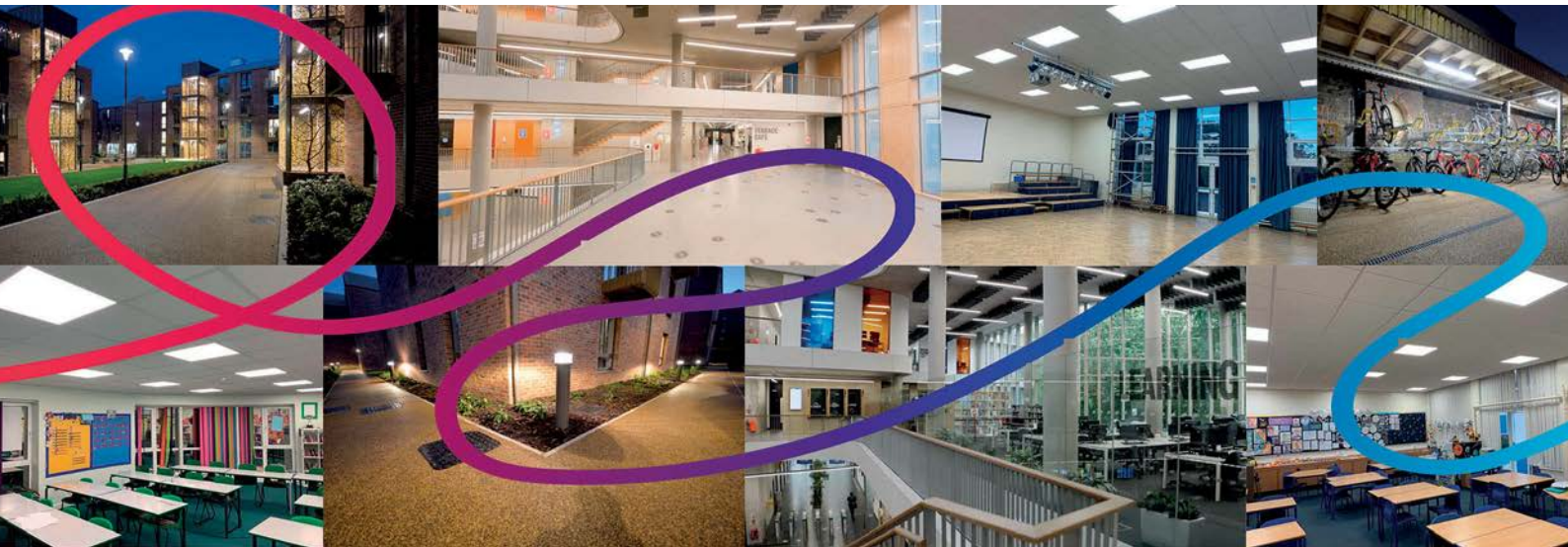
Annual carbon savings



Thank you all. We are extremely pleased with how smooth the whole process has been, which has meant there has been no disruption to teaching and learning whatsoever.



- John Bennett, Deputy Head, Glynne Primary School



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The Head's Guide To...

FACILITIES AND FINANCE

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“Students who feel safe want to come to school”

How improved safeguarding has boosted attendance at Breakwater Academy

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THE MISSION:

TO CONSOLIDATE PROCESSES FOR BETTER FINANCES

MAT: Deal Education Alliance for Learning Trust (DEALT)

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER: David Myatt

B

alancing budgets is the biggest challenge facing schools and trusts across the UK right now, with rising energy bills, calls for higher wages and inflation all playing their part.

A survey of governors and trustees by the National Governance Association (NGA) showed that just 30% of respondents felt financially stable. This uncertainty is showing no sign of easing, with only 35% believing that their organisation is sufficiently funded to deliver its vision and strategy.

Asked about the government's performance on education, 10% had a positive view – the lowest since first asked in 2011. The problems don't only relate to financial matters, as recruitment and retention continues to be a problem, with challenges relating to hiring the required number of teaching staff at their highest level since 2016.

But how can consolidating processes and the introduction of a central services team help schools to ensure that they are operating as efficiently as possible?



1. Better budgeting

No matter the size of a school or trust, those reliant on disparate systems will struggle to gain a complete and accurate picture of their budget. At a basic level, this may create delays in processing, or administrative processes being duplicated.

Longer term, this can be detrimental to the trust's overall financial health, with overspending, wastage and discrepancies going unnoticed.

Previously, each of DEALT's eight schools was responsible for compiling its own budget and Kent County Council monitored the process. Not only did this

require eight headteachers liaising with separate administrative teams, when it came to reviewing the previous year's budget versus actual spend, schools tended to commission an external expert to review and make appropriate adjustments. Through all this, there was very little information being shared between the schools. This is incredibly costly from a financial and resource point of view, but also prevented key learnings and best practice from being shared. Now, through the introduction of a shared central services team, the process has been consolidated and time spent on budget planning, monitoring and reporting has been halved.



Because of a shared team, the time spent on budget planning, monitoring and reporting has been halved

David Myatt
Chief Financial Officer



2. Dipping into your talent pool

The central services team has representation from all our schools and is made up of three former bursars, a former front office administrator, a former premises administrator and me as CFO. Its purpose is to streamline processes and reduce operating waste. The Trust felt a unified team would make processes and decision-making less time consuming and also free up school employees to

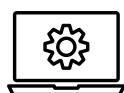




concentrate on their own responsibilities.

The office is located on school grounds, keeping funding within the Trust. The process of creating the team was intense, with tight timeframes; the budget had to be decided, which included the necessary roles, the pay bands those roles might require for the level of experience and then the application process for roles could begin.

Each team member has a set of duties that cover all schools. It means all schools are treated in the same way and all processing follows the same procedures.



3. Using the right software

While planning and reporting are vital elements of any budget, in today's challenging economic climate the ability to monitor budgets in real time is also essential - something we've only been able to do since implementing the Access Finance and Budgets software.

Now, we can view three numbers - actual spend, projected end-of-year spend and year-to-date (YTD) spend. The ability to track these numbers over time provides us with a much clearer picture of what is going on across the Trust and areas in need of attention.

Similarly, with costs spiralling, being able to generate accurate forecasts is incredibly useful. For example,

if electricity costs are expected to rise by around 5% year-on-year, we can input this information into the system and map out the projected impact on our budgets over a period of time. This allows us to be far more proactive in our approach to budgeting and understand where we might see a surplus or have to cut back.

Another benefit of consolidating this process is that we can now identify discrepancies in spending. Is one school paying more for a certain service or material than another? If so, why? Are there any shining examples of schools saving money in a specific area? If so, what can others learn? In such a challenging market, these insights can make a huge difference to the whole school and the quality of teaching it's able to deliver.



4. Improving day-to-day financial management

It's not just the budgeting process that's improved, the management of day-to-day finances across the entire organisation has been significantly streamlined since we implemented new systems and processes.

Before the introduction of the shared services team, six of our eight schools relied upon a member of the front office team to manage basic financial tasks, such as allocating payments for school trips or ordering supplies for teachers. Not only did this act as a distraction and, at times, prevent them from being able to effectively support pupils, teachers and parents, these individuals were often asked to undertake an array of additional tasks that did not fall within the scope of their role.

Now, all of this is handled by the central services team. Not only has this largely freed-up the front office staff, it has also allowed us to slash the amount of money we are spending with service providers - software is

How the CST has made efficiencies

Here are two examples of how Trust has benefitted from our shared team:

- Prior to academising, our six schools used different methods to achieve ICT compliance - from an employee dedicated to ICT, through weekly appointments, to drop in on request only. The difference in activity was startling, but also incredibly inefficient. The team analysed the patterns of usage, the costs of usage and our needs as a trust, which helped us determine the required level of ICT deployment and look to the local marketplace for a provider. This has yielded thousands of pounds of savings for the Trust and the external ICT provider can plan for activities with greater detail because they are an active part of the conversation.

- When it comes to the use of centralised accounting, budgeting and HR systems, this joined up level of thinking and processing is absolutely essential for reporting and monitoring, and ensures all our schools work on a level playing field when it comes to data and fund handling. We simply couldn't achieve this if our school finances were processed on site by individuals within that school. Having these horizontal connections to the schools eradicates inconsistency, the friend of inefficiency.

David Myatt is chief finance officer for the Dear Education Alliance for Learning Trust (DEALT)

one great example. As we are now purchasing licences as a collective, we qualify for a greater discount. In fact, we've seen a reduction of between 10% and 15% in our spending on software.

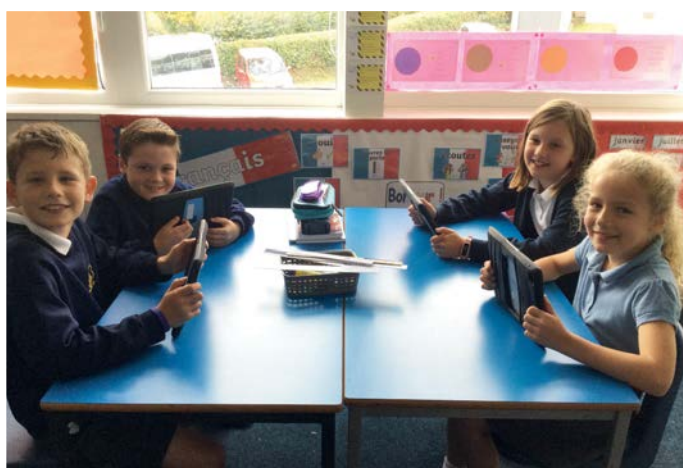
The consolidation of certain processes and introduction of specialist technology has allowed us, at DEALT, to generate significant savings. This resource is already being re-deployed to help teaching staff to provide the best possible student experience. **HT**

ICT IN ACTION:

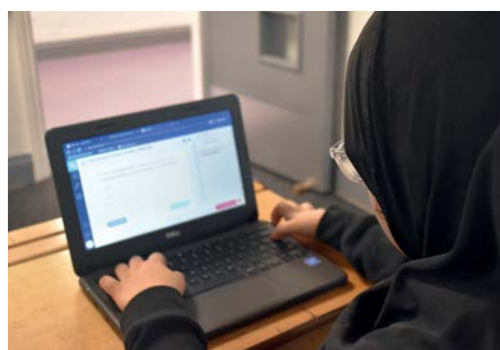
EDTECH IMPACT

Three software packages that will help to support teaching and learning

1



2



3



1 | DISCOVERY EDUCATION CODING



Beth Ings, computing lead at
Bramham Primary School,
part of the Bramham and
Shadwell Federation

**“PUPILS CAN BUILD THEIR OWN
GAMES AND APPS AND WE CAN
EVIDENCE THEIR PROGRESS”**

Why did you choose Discovery Education Coding?

We wanted a complete scheme of work that would be easy for teachers to deliver, regardless of their computing experience. Discovery Education Coding has lots of built in support for teachers with over 100 lesson plans and explanatory videos. It's also really enjoyable for children. They can build their own games and apps and we can evidence their progress.

How is Discovery Education Coding used?

We use Discovery Education Coding across both our primary schools, with designated teaching time each week. The platform encourages teachers and students to work together and problem solve. So, rather than giving the children iPads and sending them away to code, we work alongside them. Each lesson is clearly planned out with teaching and talking points in every step. It's also

very accessible and meets the needs of different types of learners.

What impact has Discovery Education Coding had?

Since using Discovery Education Coding, we've delivered clear whole-school progression in computing, with more students 'meeting' or 'working above' than ever before. Recently, our Local Authority did a mock deep dive into our computing

provision and they loved how we use Discovery Education Coding. They were very impressed that our students use the correct terminology. Having fun with coding is important and because Discovery Education Coding is enjoyable, our students can't wait to use it. It's helping them to build transferrable skills and has really sparked their interest in IT. When we ask our students what they want to be, they say that they want to work in technology.

2 | CENTURY



Naveed Idrees OBE,
headteacher of Feversham
Primary Academy, part of the
Academies Enterprise Trust

“THE AI RECOMMENDATIONS STRENGTHEN UNDERSTANDING, FILL GAPS, AND ADDRESS MISCONCEPTIONS”

Why did you choose CENTURY?

We wanted to fill gaps by using diagnostics and AI recommendations in class - to help retention and memory - and at home to support and consolidate existing learning. It also helps parents support their children at home.

Another school in our trust was using CENTURY. We looked at what they were doing and thought it would be great for our pupils, too.

How is it used in your school?

The teachers use CENTURY to supplement the curriculum with its carefully targeted resources, as an intervention tool and as a

homework tool. It does all the marking for you so you just use the data and statistics to find out where gaps are, and you can target and inform planning. We set aside a specific time every day where everybody uses CENTURY for half an hour. Pupils revisit material covered in class at their own pace. The AI recommendations strengthen understanding, fill gaps, and address misconceptions. We use CENTURY during the holidays for tutoring as well, because that's when you get dips in learning. It is a really powerful tool for that.

What has been the impact?

The numbers tell it all. Last year, our pupils spent two months

and 14 days, on average, on CENTURY doing maths. That's another two and a half months of additional learning, which is amazing. It's mainly in their own time at home. We don't have to encourage them to use it, they're just happy to because it's so engaging. They enjoy doing it, and obviously that has a positive impact on our results. The progress made within one year has been significant: our maths SATs results were above the national average, about 84%, which is quite phenomenal considering the starting point at the beginning of the year. A lot of that was down to CENTURY.

3 | CLASSROOM.CLOUD



Jérôme Nogues, head
of languages and head
of digital at Packwood

“IT'S SO INTUITIVE, STAFF FIND IT EASY TO USE AND WE ARE ALWAYS DISCOVERING USEFUL NEW FEATURES TO TRY”

Why did you choose classroom.cloud?

Previously our school had a different classroom EdTech system, but staff found it difficult to use and it was very ineffective. I wanted to find something better. I'd heard about classroom.cloud on Twitter and after receiving a walkthrough from Mark Anderson at NetSupport, I convinced the school to do a trial. We haven't looked back - it's so intuitive, staff find it easy to use and we are always discovering useful new features to try.

How is classroom.cloud used in your school?

We use it as a classroom management system to support technology-enhanced

lessons. When leading a class, classroom.cloud allows you to monitor students' screens, send messages, send and receive surveys, open and close windows on all their devices, and use fun 'gamification' features like quizzes and competitions to make lessons more engaging. Once the teacher understands how it works, it's a very seamless experience. There are also other features like power management, which allow us to power off devices at the end of a lesson, which helps save energy.

What impact has classroom.cloud had?

It's amazing how much it's increased staff confidence with

using technology. I've always been the 'techie guy' bringing in new gadgets and showing the exciting things you can do in class, but others have felt technology was too difficult to use. Now, after initial training and with ongoing CPD, staff feel capable with classroom.cloud and confident using and exploring all the different features. It's a world apart from our previous edtech system, which no one was bothering to use. classroom.cloud helps prepare our students for high school, where they also use Microsoft Surface. Above all, it's a great way to get primary age students excited about learning.

TECH TASTERS



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Specialising in providing safe power management solutions for laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and similar devices for over two decades, LapSafe has been working closely with the education sector to bridge the digital divide. LapSafe prioritise providing students with access to up-to-date technology through their innovative Smart Lockers and charging trolleys.



ENGAGING LEARNING

Purple Mash is a whole-school resource that supports teachers across the curriculum. Included in every subscription are creative tools, games, and activities, all of which are engaging for children. Support and planning are included for teachers, which saves time; there's something for every learner and teacher.



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, VisiTap, which is user-friendly, flexible and affordable. Using VisiTap, 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

SAFEGUARDING IS THE KEY TO BOOSTING ATTENDANCE

A multi-faceted approach is leading to less absenteeism and better attainment, says **Zoë Griffiths**

M

ornings at Breakwater Academy, a one-form entry primary school in Newhaven, East Sussex, feel warm and smell of fresh toast. Some of the younger children eat theirs whilst the register is taken, others when completing their morning learning tasks. Sometimes, the older pupils choose to leave their slice until breaktime.

For a number of children, this is their breakfast as they won't have eaten at home.

Breakwater, part of STEP Academy Trust since 2016, serves a predominantly white British community, with above average numbers of disadvantaged pupils - year group percentages range from 25% to 67%. This challenging context informs all aspects of provision, from the approach to pedagogy and curriculum design, to the culture of safeguarding.

Safeguarding pervades all aspects of provision at Breakwater, because it has to. The post-pandemic context is ever more

challenging due to the increase in parental and pupil anxiety and mental health issues, none of which meets external agency thresholds for either support or statutory involvement. The academy continues to have high levels of mobility amongst pupils, which makes tracking

the most vulnerable families extremely challenging.

The below-average starting points that characterise the children starting reception, particularly in terms of speech and language, adds to this challenge. Safeguarding in the post-pandemic context falls more than ever to schools as other services struggle to meet

Children's attitude
to food and eating
provides an insight
into their wider
wellbeing

increased demand; a lack of capacity and long waiting lists means that schools such as Breakwater fulfil an ever-widening safeguarding role.

All good schools prioritise a robust culture of safeguarding that far exceeds the statutory expectations; we are no exception. The processes and procedures of managing disclosures, record-keeping and

staff training are embedded.

The safeguarding team is large for a small school: the role of designated safeguarding lead rests with all senior leaders (including the executive headteacher) and a learning mentor. This approach ensures that capacity for safeguarding is never an issue, there is always someone to discuss concerns with and to help make decisions. Importantly, at Breakwater, there are a number of complementary characteristics of provision which have had a positive impact on safeguarding.

Making sure they're in school

The first of these is a robust, no-nonsense approach to, and prioritisation of, attendance, which has been in place since academisation. If a child is absent, this is acted upon swiftly. One of the benefits of a small school is that all staff know all the children; the attendance officer alerts the DSL immediately at the slightest concern. Patterns of absence are monitored by the education welfare officer, a position funded by STEP Academy Trust, who agrees a plan of support and reinforces expectations.

This frequency and persistence of contact is impactful and allows staff to spot any warning signs that might lead to wider safeguarding concerns. Learning

continues to be applied from the periods of COVID lockdowns, whereby the prioritisation of contact formed a large part of the safeguarding duty. Teachers spoke to pupils at least weekly (daily for some vulnerable families) by telephone or Zoom calls, and if contact could not be made, then doorstep visits were carried out. Even for families thinking this an unnecessary intrusion, it was a constant reminder that the academy cared about them and was prepared to maintain that contact to ensure that their children were safe. The momentum from that relationship building and expectation has continued.

Overcoming the emotional fog

When in school, children know they are there to learn. The high expectations for their conduct and approach to learning are embedded, but for some children the complexity of their lives outside school means that they



need extra support to be able to learn successfully. Learning mentors work with a range of children, some of whom are identified because of a known safeguarding concern, but most because they are displaying signs of needing support in removing barriers to learning. Research evidence shows that anxiety, worry about what's happening outside school and other types of emotional 'fog' make cognitive overload much more likely; overcoming this is a fundamental tenet of the knowledge curriculum at Breakwater. It is the role of all staff, particularly the learning mentors, to help to lessen and remove these barriers, which in turn fosters an open, nurturing and safe environment.

Food as a window to children's lives

Children's relationship with, and attitude towards, food and eating provides a useful insight into their wider wellbeing, so in addition

to toast in the mornings, children are offered fresh and dried fruit, rice cakes, crackers and bread sticks if needed. The kitchen staff are also vigilant and talk to senior leaders if a child's eating habits change. This whole-school approach provides a platform for gathering information about the children which allows staff to both personalise their learning and maintain a robust knowledge base if safeguarding concerns arise.

It's good to talk

Providing a safe space for the children to talk, participate in therapeutic activities, or just sit and munch on a cracker for a few minutes in a quiet room facilitates an environment of trust and safety. This gives the children the best possible chance of experiencing success in their learning. The word 'successful' can be heard frequently at Breakwater; the children are encouraged to aspire to succeed and achieve, and to present

themselves as well as possible. This includes standing or sitting up straight, smiling and greeting people around the academy, using full sentences when speaking and looking at whoever is speaking. Curriculum content is designed to help the children acquire the vocabulary and language to understand and make links in the knowledge they are learning, but also to think critically, express their opinions and ask questions.

How is this linked to safeguarding? At Breakwater, the preventative safeguarding curriculum includes the premise that if children develop an awareness of who they are and how they fit into wider society (knowledge), and are able to express themselves appropriately (conduct), then they are better equipped to know that they are not safe, that something is not as it should be, and that they should share their concerns with an adult they trust.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS OUR APPROACH?

The holistic, embedded approach to safeguarding that is stitched into the fabric of Breakwater has had a transformational impact.

- Parental engagement and the quality of relationships is much improved and there is increased participation in parent consultations.
- A recent parent survey found 99% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child is well, safe and happy at Breakwater. The strength of this relationship places the school in a much better position to signpost services to parents as they are more willing to express a need for help, all of which contributes to a preventative approach to safeguarding.
- Attendance continues to improve and is now more frequently in line with national levels. Persistent absence, which is confined to a small number of pupils, has decreased.
- Suspensions are rare.
- Academic achievement, which in 2022 saw performance in statutory assessments in with line or exceeding national levels, is the best in the school's history. Pupils' performance in statutory assessments is in line with, or exceeding, national levels.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, and the school environment exudes high expectations and care.

Ultimately, students who feel safe and want to come to school simply achieve well, so academic achievement is the best it has ever been. Complacency is simply not an option. **HT**



Zoë Griffiths is executive headteacher of Breakwater Academy, Newhaven

“It’s one of the privileges of being in Year 6”



Transitioning pupils at Liverpool College are spending their final year of primary school in a brand-new, purpose-built eco classroom block

L

iverpool College – an all-through academy for children aged four to 19 years – is the most over-subscribed school in the north of England, according to its principal, Hans Broekman. So, when it needed new buildings to allow an expansion in pupil numbers to go ahead, the focus was on providing quick, ecologically sound and sustainable facilities for its burgeoning junior school.

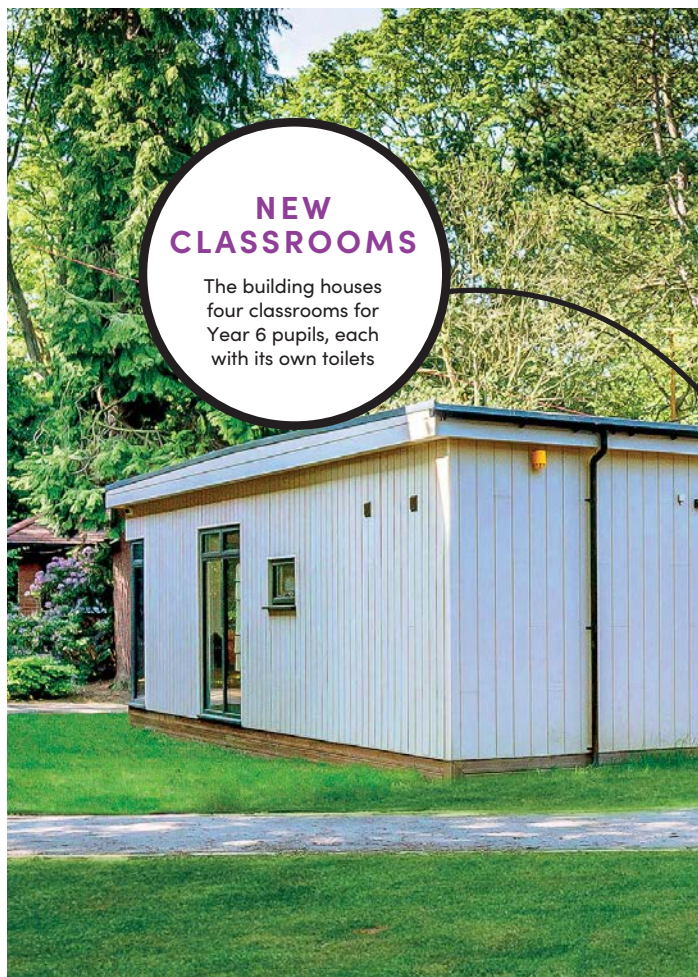
Intended to house more than 1600 pupils at full capacity, Liverpool College needed to think fast about how it could accommodate a growing number of pupils coming to its primary phase.

The college stands on the site of a former independent school, and found itself in disagreement with education officials over the specifications for classroom size and the funding needed to extend. “The school was originally built to accommodate 20 to a class but suddenly we were expected to put 30 children into the same space,” said Mr Broekman.

“By securing private donations we managed to come up with a solution.”

The academy worked with TG Escapes to create a new classroom block, which is being used by the eldest key stage 2 pupils. In recognition of the fact that it stands on the site of a former swimming pool, it is known as The Pool House.

“The building has had the grounds around it landscaped, and it’s really one of the privileges of being in Year 6 that they have the use of this fantastic building before they graduate up to the secondary phase.”



NEW CLASSROOMS

The building houses four classrooms for Year 6 pupils, each with its own toilets



LIGHT, AIRY CLASSES

Pupils are taught in bright, well-ventilated classrooms with all the resources they need for learning



SHELTERED PORCH

The porch outside the classrooms offers space for pupils to leave shoes and other personal items without the need to take them indoors

HIGH WINDOWS AND DOORS

High quality glazing and sealing means classrooms are kept warm by winter sun, and natural light helps with fuel efficiency and energy costs

EASY ACCESS

The provision of ramps and steps allows easy access for all, regardless of any mobility problems

WALLS AND ROOF

The building is constructed timber which comes from certified sustainable sources, with 80% recycled insulation

VENTILATION AND CLIMATE CONTROL

Staff and pupils enjoy a state of the art ventilation and climate control system, with a focus on air quality, to make teaching and learning comfortable

EXTERNAL CLADDING

The cedar facades are resistant to all weather conditions and impervious to rot, mould and pests

CORNER WINDOWS

Fewer 'walled' areas mean more natural light and visibility to the landscaped gardens and woodlands on the school site

"EXTENDING THE EXISTING JUNIOR SCHOOL WASN'T VIABLE"



Hans Broekman reflects on the design of the new building

Q Why was this new classroom block needed by Liverpool College?

We had recently built a new three-form entry infant school but only had a two-form entry junior school, so it was at risk of becoming very over-crowded. Extension of the existing junior school was not a viable option so the TG Escapes solution gave us the extra capacity at a fraction of the price of new build. We were able to tailor the construction to suit the needs, location and ground conditions of our particular site.

Q What do you particular like about the building?

The eco nature of the building is in keeping with the nearby wooded area and the local landscape, but one of the best things was the speed in which we were able to gain planning permission and then to get it built. Constructing schools can be a long, drawn-out and expensive procedure but because of the nature of the building materials and the construction process, it was built over the summer ready for when the children returned to school in September.

Q What do the staff and pupils think of it?

Both the staff and children give it a very high quality rating. They love the natural light and visibility from the large windows, and the space inside. It's warm and clean, and has climate control year-round with views over landscaped areas, which includes a garden. It's a very pleasant environment for them to teach and learn. The extra space they have makes all the difference.

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The Details...

Where?

■ ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock

When?

■ Wednesday 29 – Friday 31 March, 2023

How do I register?

■ Go to: bettuk23-registration.personatech.com before March 3 to book your free tickets.



Don't miss out on the biggest week in education: **BETT 2023**

Bett UK, taking place over three days from 29-31 March at ExCeL London, is the leading global event for educators and students to connect and engage with technology providers.

Over the past three decades, Bett has evolved and shaped its event to better serve the education community. Visit bettuk23-registration.personatech.com to get your free ticket to Bett 2023 by registering on-time before 3rd March 2023. Late registration tickets (4th March 2023 onwards) will incur a fee.

Showcasing world-leading speakers and exhibitors

This year's event will feature over 300 speakers to discuss six global themes - leadership, futures, inclusion, wellbeing, skills, innovation - including:

- **Steven Bartlett**, youngest ever Dragon and host of the leading podcast Diary of a CEO
- **Anne-Marie Imafidon** MBE, computer scientist, mathematician and social entrepreneur
- **Michael Rosen**, beloved children's author and poet

Sessions will start in The Arena from 09:00 – 10:00 and late afternoon from 15:45 – 17:15.

Sparking conversation

A new meetings programme, Connect @ Bett, will offer an opportunity for participants to interact with other educators and developers, during 15-minute onsite meeting slots. The sessions will feature virtual demos, product launches, augmented reality experiences and targeted conversations on specific topics.

Shaping the narrative

Bett's global themes that will be the focus of all discussions include:

- **Inclusion:** embrace a more equitable approach to education by providing assistive technologies and fostering an inclusive culture for all students.
- **Wellbeing:** revolutionise approaches to wellbeing, considering student voices and reducing teacher workload in order to increase teacher retention.
- **Skills:** Focus on helping staff stay empowered and skilled through professional development, embracing new approaches that foster today's technology-driven world.

For more information on the speakers, exhibitors and where to sign up for tickets, visit uk.bettshow.com/welcome.



BETT 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

THE ARENA

Using the arts to improve student and teacher wellbeing.

Dame Darcey Bussell shares the positive impacts of dance through her charity DDMIX for Schools. March 29, 08.40 – 09.00



TEACHING AND LEARNING

Experiential Learning: solving real world problems

Find out how teacher Mark Martin has used modern computing tools to develop cutting edge learning environments. March 30, 11.00-11.30



LEADERS @ BETT

The Datafication of Education: the problem and the potential

Discover practical ways to navigate student data management in your school. March 29, 10.30-11.00



FUTURES THEATRE

Assessment – sharing best practice across education sectors to maximise impact

Join an expert panel to discuss how technology is being used in formative and summative assessment. March 31, 11.45-12.15



Why your school needs a **DIGITAL STRATEGY**

Use of technology needs to have structure if it is to be effective, says James Garnett, Director of IT at United Learning and Bett Advisory Board member



Each school, academy and Trust should have a digital strategy aligned to its vision

and its development plan.

Getting it right

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) report on Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning should help shape thinking and provide a vital starting point: why would any teacher waste time using digital tools that don't make their teaching more effective? At trust level this should be about consolidating around core tools and services.

Once written, the strategy should be owned, exemplified and led by a member of the senior leadership team.

The first steps

Ensure you audit hardware, software and online solutions to make the most of what you already have, identify any infrastructure issues, and stop paying for under-used or ineffective services that have no impact on pupil outcome. Using the Department for Education's Digital Standards will enable you to develop a solid and reliable foundation.

Funding your strategy

A sustainable strategy will need a funding plan, to replace equipment as it becomes obsolete.

Implementing the strategy

Don't try to implement all in one go, as it might be too challenging for staff and students. Instead, work through challenges and identify solutions to create the scaffolding for successful implementation for others. Don't be afraid to accept that something isn't working for your school.



Training and development

Technology adoption often fails because staff (and pupils) have not been given the time and training to embed it. Sufficient time needs to be allocated for staff to learn how to use the new tools, review their practice and have follow-up training.

Reviewing the implementation

Review your strategy on a regular basis to ensure that agreed outcomes are being achieved, the tools are meeting expectations, and milestones achieved. This may result in the strategy being updated because some technologies need to be



DAVID HUNTINGFORD

School: Provost, William Ford Junior School, Dagenham

@Bett: Speaker – The Creative

Classroom: Spaces, tools and opportunities for creativity to thrive in primary schools.

Bett Academy Live – March 31, 11-11.30

WHAT WILL YOU BE SPEAKING ABOUT AT THE BETT SHOW?

I'll be joining Tom Doust, of the Institute of Imagination, with whom we've been partnering over the past year, to discuss our collaboration. I heard Tom speak at an event last year, and what he said was everything I wanted for my school. After the presentation I approached him and, while our authority isn't one the Institute normally works with, we have since formed a great working relationship.

WHY WAS CHANGE NEEDED IN YOUR SCHOOL?

I had taken on the headship of William Ford in 2020 and it was clear a lot of modernisation was needed – not least in pedagogy – as well as a fresh and more creative approach to delivering the curriculum. Creativity was not just for subjects such as art and music, but needed to be interwoven into the whole curriculum and to be its main driver.

WHAT CONDITIONS DID YOU INHERIT WHEN YOU JOINED WILLIAM FORD?

We had no iPads in school and no record had been kept of the ones given out during lockdown, so we didn't know where they were. The ones we got back were in a very poor state. There was no computing suite and the wifi didn't work. So, we needed to find the money to invest in systems. We now have a computing suite and have installed computers so that every child has access and other devices can be plugged in.

HOW DID THE INSTITUTE OF IMAGINATION SUPPORT YOU?

The Institute loaned us iPads, and included us in remote training sessions, so we could see how other schools were using creativity in the curriculum. It was good for our staff to see that it was something taking place all over London with schools working collaboratively. The Institute really inspired us to think differently about making lessons more engaging to deliver.



abandoned, others amended or the pace of adoption slowed or increased.

The long-term future

Neither education nor technology remain static. The improvements in adaptive learning and formative assessment tools will continue (the development on formal online assessments is already underway in small scale pilots), and VR/AR technologies continue to evolve. Small scale pilots and shared best practice will continue to be important in avoiding wasted effort as will peer recommendation sites such as EdTech Impact.



PROMETHEAN - TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

STAND NL14

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RANSOM PUBLISHING

STAND TBC

Get kids reading with Ransom's new digital platform of phonics books and teaching resources. Its virtual library will include 225 fully decodable readers to match any SSP programme. The platform features acclaimed catch-up resources, detailed teachers' guides and a DfE-validated SSP teaching programme.



THE SAFEGUARDING COMPANY

STAND SE62

The Safeguarding Company is the maker of the award-winning MyConcern – the easy-to-use safeguarding solution, trusted by thousands of schools across the UK and around the world – which is underpinned by world-class customer support.



DIGITAL DEVICES

STAND TBC

Vestel is Europe's leading manufacturer of TVs, displays and interactive screens, with an enviable reputation for quality and value. Its interactive whiteboards are affordable and easy to use, perfectly fitting the education brief from primary schools to universities. It offers a comprehensive range of digital screens.



DR HELEN EDWARDS

Title: Director and co-founder of Tapestry
@Bett: Finalist in Bett Awards in two categories

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COMPANY

Created by educators, Tapestry Online Learning Journal provides a flexible, easy to use system for early years and primary, in both mainstream and specialist schools, designed to reduce workload, assist the development of each school's provision, and build and maintain relationships with families.

WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS USE YOUR PRODUCT?

Keeping everything and everyone connected is a big challenge. Tapestry holds monitoring, assessment and planning in one place, making it easy to find everything in just a few clicks, and giving SLTs an overview of one child or an entire cohort. Staff can create specific activities for individuals and groups of children, and encourage autonomous learning by enabling each child securely to access their own journal. Tapestry records feedback, shares reports and provides child-centred support for SEND provision.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TAPESTRY TO BE NOMINATED IN TWO BETT CATEGORIES?

This is the first time we've entered the Bett Awards so we are delighted we have been shortlisted for both of our entries: 'Assessment, Planning and Progress Monitoring' and 'Early Years Digital Product or Service'. It is particularly exciting to get this independent recognition now, when we have just celebrated our 10th birthday.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR TAPESTRY?

We have a roadmap, and a wish list, of new features that will keep us busy for years to come. We keep these under regular review as new technologies emerge, and educational requirements and goals evolve. This year we are concentrating on new parental engagement functionality, adding administrative tools, and refining our bespoke framework feature. We constantly monitor the needs of our customers and respond flexibly when the environment changes.



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The Head's Guide To... **LEADERSHIP**

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Managing neurodivergent staff

How inclusive are your recruitment procedures?

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ATTRACTING AND KEEPING HIGH QUALITY STAFF

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

The best outcomes for pupils come from being taught consistently by experienced and well qualified staff. This means that, regardless of how well run your school is, having high-quality teachers is vital to achieve the best results. Thinking about how best to retain staff, as well as considering approaches to effective recruitment, is therefore a crucial aspect of school improvement.

The benefits of retention

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

Retention is also important because of the cost and difficulty of recruiting new staff, especially at present. Unfortunately, schools in areas of disadvantage experience more difficulty recruiting staff than those in affluent areas. A Sutton Trust report found that 85% of teachers in disadvantaged schools felt that their school's quality of education was affected by high staff turnover and difficulties in recruitment.

Research into teacher recruitment and retention

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

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

A report on teacher recruitment and retention in England, published by the House of Commons Library in December 2022, noted that the overall number of qualified teachers has not kept pace with the number of pupils over the last decade. Postgraduate teacher recruitment is 29% below target for the latest academic year, after relatively high recruitment in the previous two years, due to the pandemic. Some subjects are suffering from particularly low

recruitment levels, with physics 83% below target.

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

Teacher retention concerns

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

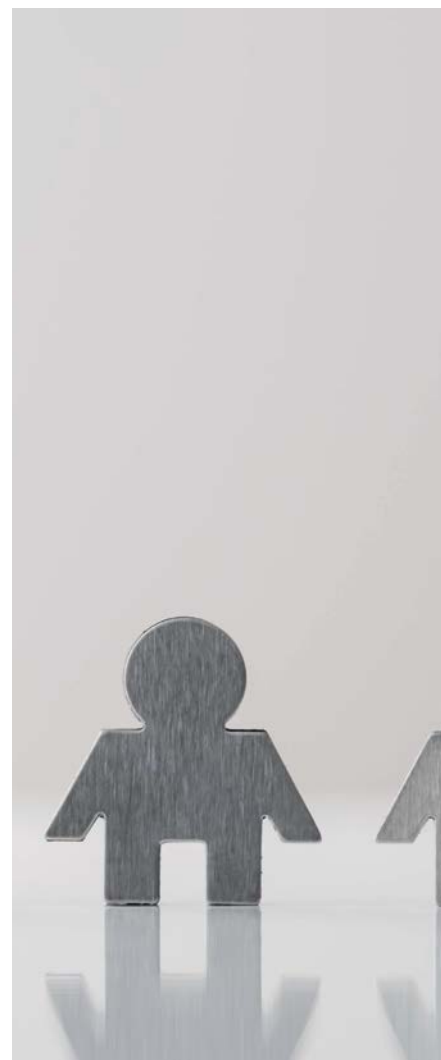
Schools are also struggling to fill vacant posts, with more teachers being asked to double up their roles to fill gaps. The figures in the survey are broadly in line with the DfE's statistics, which show a two-year retention rate post qualifying of just over 80% and 41% of teachers leaving the profession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

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

Retention and CPD: the Early Career Framework

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

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





HELPING STAFF FEEL VALUED

Key strategies for teacher retention:

- Minimise demands that cause workload, such as requests for data collection
- Use a verbal feedback policy to minimise marking workload
- Have a policy about not answering emails outside of working hours
- Where teachers take on additional roles, such as being an ECT mentor, consider how to minimise other parts of their workload
- Offer staff time off to attend important family events, such as primary school nativity plays
- Offer access to services that support staff wellbeing, such as free gym membership
- Provide day-to-day benefits, such as free tea/coffee/biscuits
- Fund an end of term meal to show staff how much you value them
- Offer flexible working as a powerful incentive to retain staff

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

of their ECT.

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

Incentives for retention

Characteristics of the workplace, such as workload management, school culture, teaching environment, opportunities for progression and the quality of CPD all have an influence on staff retention. As your most important resource, your staff need you to support their wellbeing and minimise their workload.

Teachers who feel valued are more likely to be open

with you about their plans, because of a sense of loyalty to the school. For instance, they might let you know that they are thinking of applying for a promotion at another school, giving you additional time to recruit a suitable replacement. Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff has a strong impact on disadvantaged children's outcomes, so schools can use pupil premium funds to support this work.

Getting recruitment right

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

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

When advertising vacancies, consider how you might emphasise the benefits that you can offer the candidate, as well as what you want them to offer your school. Highlight the work you do to reduce teacher workload in your school and talk about opportunities for career progression.

Local opportunities

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

Experienced teachers are more likely to be attached to a

specific area and less likely to move to find new roles, meaning that local recruitment strategies are key to recruiting experienced staff. For instance, using local press and local Facebook or parent WhatsApp groups, as well as more traditional outlets such as the TES, Schools Week and Indeed. [HT](#)



Sue Cowley is a teacher, author, trainer and keynote speaker. She has taught in all phases of education and has helped manage her local early years setting for over a decade. www.suecowley.co.uk

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Years
1-6

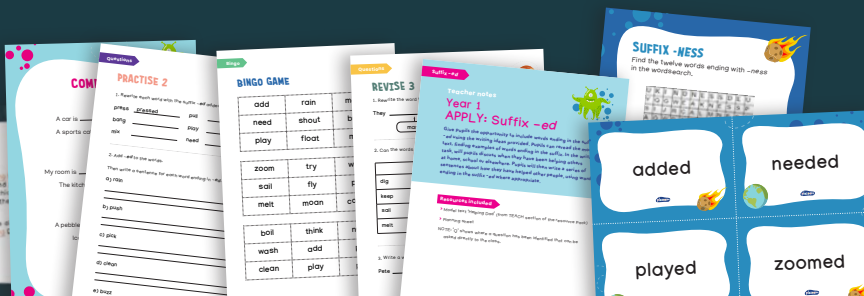
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THE PROBLEM

A PARENT HAS COME TO COMPLAIN ABOUT A MEMBER OF STAFF. HOW SHOULD I MANAGE THIS?



for a few minutes, I told her that he hadn't asked me if he could use the toilet. She drew breath, looked at him and asked if this was true. It was. This was the bit of the story he had forgotten to share, and she had forgotten to ask about. This really could have been quickly resolved without me having to put down my cup of tea.

When a parent comes to see you to complain about a member of staff, it's a serious matter. The primary objective is to remain impartial and to acquire all the alleged facts. Let's not get blindsided if things become emotional, opinionated, inaccurate and disproportionate. I've seen complaints quickly unravel because things just didn't add up when I've asked the right questions.

It's important that the parent knows you are receptive; most will find this conversation difficult. It may well have been manifested, or even fuelled, by others. Be supportive without being submissive. If you can begin to identify the complainant's desired outcome, you can usually spot any unjust allegations or even retribution.

A

As a leader, how can you successfully assess the complaint, whilst seeking to take the heat out of the situation?

It's important to manage the first meeting with confidence, making sure not to attract any further criticism about the way you handle the matter. Let's also assume that this is at the informal, sharing stage, where you may be able to intervene and resolve things amicably. If this was a more formal complaint, then the complaints procedure would possibly be actioned. Be careful from the outset not to head too far into serious allegations without the right support. I would be equally as procedural if this was a persistent complainant, too.

A parental complaint about a member of staff requires a very careful approach. Even then it will almost inevitably cause conflict because you are unlikely to be able to secure the 'right' outcome for all parties. Nice as it would be to create a win/win situation, this just may not be possible.

When I was a Y3 class teacher, I was summoned to talk to a parent outside the head's office. I had no idea why but when I arrived I saw a seething mother, standing with her sheepish looking son, who was in my class. She informed me that I had not let her son go to the toilet, and that he had come home wet. After she had shouted at me

Remember, too, that just because a person is upset, it doesn't mean that someone else has done something wrong. Your complainant may be wearing their heart on their sleeve, but you're not. Sitting alongside your parent, and not behind a desk, you can be impartial, lessening the possible assumption that your default position may be to defend the school.

Be careful not to make promises about resolving this immediately because you will need to go away and find out more. If you are unable to offer an accurate explanation by the end of the meeting, tell them you will follow this up internally and will get back to them quickly. This gives you time to think, observe, speak to a senior colleague, governor or HR. From here, any further conversations with the member of staff, or complainant, can be carefully managed with the right preparation and conditions. We can only 'act' on the initial complaint when we have both, or all, accounts.

As always, if you've worked hard before now to secure trust with your families, investing time and energy to nurture your relationships, you will find that this will go an awful long way to greasing the wheels for a calm and proportionate resolution. **HT**



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

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL TRUST

Carol Dewhurst shares the lessons learned in an evolving MAT, as it celebrates its tenth anniversary

A

s the leader of a Trust, I have witnessed first-hand how developing a family of schools can add direct value to the education and experiences of young people. Local partnerships had been happening long before the first academy trust opened its doors, but the beauty of the Trust model is that it formalises this collaboration and builds extra capacity through the power of a central team.

At Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT), we have worked hard to develop effective and clear policies and practices which have helped all our schools to thrive. While these processes have inevitably evolved as the Trust has grown, we have remained true to our values, ethos and ways of working.

On reaching our tenth birthday milestone, we reflect upon how the Trust has changed, our plans for growth and further development and the essential lessons we learned along the way.

Five key ingredients have helped us to drive improvement and innovation within the Trust.

Be consistent with your mission and values

A trust chooses its mission and values for a reason, and these form a core part of why schools opt to join that trust family and the staff elect to work in it. It is important that these are a lens for decision making, and that colleagues 'get it' and come along on the ride with you.

For example, within BDAT, our curriculum, school improvement initiatives and wider activity always reflect our values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience and excellence. We believe in a comprehensive, holistic approach to education,

giving as much weight to the soft skills and mental wellbeing of pupils as to classroom lessons and graded work. Staying true to our values has also created a reliable and safe space for our pupils and colleagues to thrive and contributed to focused and consistent learning.

Harnessing talent at all levels

At BDAT, we could not do what we do without our colleagues. By acknowledging, celebrating and utilising the immense talent of each staff member, whether they are in a leadership, teaching, or administrative position, we nurture their individual skills to provide the best possible education for our pupils.

Collaboration between team members with vastly different skills on our inset days, in CPD and training sessions and through our internal and external networks, has been a wonderfully fruitful method to unlock the hidden potential in our staff.

More widely, establishing an inclusive working environment where everyone feels able to voice their thoughts and is supported in their career has helped us stay in a strong position even whilst the sector faces recruitment and retention challenges.

Our workforce focus led us to launch BDAT People, which gives all staff members the opportunity to fulfil their professional potential by delivering consistent, tailored and high-quality professional development for all.

Share and deploy best practice

As we continue to nurture talent and support school improvement, we are passionate about sharing our findings with other

trusts and educational leaders. We do this through our schools' networks as they share best practice with each other, holding regular meetings with other leading Trusts in our region and beyond, sharing insights at events and conferences and contributing to the wider conversation – be that in trade publications or across social media. One of the sector's key strengths is meaningful collaboration, which is why we are always building our network, celebrating wins and cheering on our peers. The education



We believe in giving as much weight to the soft skills and mental wellbeing of pupils as to classroom lessons and graded work

sector is a fantastic community of like-minded drivers of innovation and when great ideas are shared, more children benefit.

Practice effective and strategic communication

Strong communication underpins both successful strategies and engaged stakeholders. To achieve the most effective communication, we have established a strategy, outlining information-sharing within leadership and the wider team.

We practice communication at scale – ensuring the right people know the right things in the right order and at the right time. Learning how to identify all of these 'rights' has been informed both by strategic thinking as well as learning from our experiences, and now allowing us to reach our best form. Overall, the key takeaway has been that the who, when and how we communicate is dependent on what needs to be shared. For example, for good news updates, we may

inform all staff at the same time through channels such as emails and newsletters. Alternatively, if it's a key strategic update for the Trust, we may inform staff at our annual conference so that we can offer space for discussion and questions. Equally, for more sensitive information, we may need to cascade this to a smaller group of staff where face-to-face meetings would be more appropriate. Additionally, we encourage two-way communication, so everyone's views are equally respected and heard.

Implement targeted and impactful growth

As an organisation expands, it must continue to scale up its capacity and resources. Therefore, times of growth and of reflection and consolidation are equally important. To maximise impact for our Trust, we abide by careful and considered growth, meaning we never grow for growth's

sake. Each new member is considered carefully to make sure that we share the same vision and values and that our current schools will benefit from the new partnership. It is also important to us that, as we expand, our infrastructure grows too so that we are expanding sustainably and every school continues to receive the same excellent level of support, be that in HR, finance, IT, or senior education leaders. We ensure our current schools still receive great benefits whilst welcoming new schools to the family.

Growth includes partnerships with key stakeholders. Choosing the right partners positions the Trust for meaningful development that stays aligned with our core values and supports mutual benefits. We have, for example, forged strong early careers training partnerships with local trusts such as Gorse, Dixons and Beckfoot, in areas including initial teacher training, NPQs and the early careers framework. These help secure high quality new entrants into our trusts as we continue to grow. [HT](#)

OBSERVATIONS FROM A DECADE OF BDAT

- **Practice being kind.**
Education can be a hard and demanding job. Kindness to colleagues goes a long way. It is vital to model kind and compassionate behaviour, both to your staff and to yourself to create the best impact.
- **Teamwork is essential.**
As a CEO, be the type of leader that supports, encourages and empowers your team. You cannot lead a Trust on your own so make sure you grow and empower your team around you.
- **Choose your battles wisely.**
Be firm, yet fair when pursuing solutions and do not get disproportionately caught up on low-impact items. Big-picture thinking will be your best friend.
- **Collaboration is key.**
Do not be scared to ask for help from others who share similar roles or have differing perspectives. You often find that the best answers come from working collaboratively and taking a new approach.
- **Your task list will never end – and that is okay.**
No two days are the same and surprises will never fail to arise. Approach each day with your best effort and forgive yourself for the rest. Do not exhaust yourself trying to tick every box.
- **Support all staff equally.**
Non-teaching staff need as much love and support as teachers. It takes many different people, skills and roles to run a successful and happy school and trust. At BDAT, everyone matters!



Carol Dewhurst
OBE is CEO of
Bradford Diocesan
Academies Trust

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HOW TO HIRE THE PERFECT...

computer science teacher

Digitally savvy schools will attract digitally savvy teachers, says **Rhys Howells**

1 SHOWCASE YOUR SETTING

To appeal to the best-suited candidates, you must demonstrate your ethos and values.

Make a good first impression by providing a clear and comprehensive job advert, an easy-to-use website, a strong careers page and positive testimonials, including videos and blogs, if possible. Given the current teacher recruitment problems, it's beneficial to showcase your offering, including bespoke CPD, and positive workplace culture.

2 USE YOUR PLATFORMS

Showing you understand the importance of technology is key to attracting a computer science teacher, even if this expertise will sit alongside more general primary teaching. Advertise the role on your school or MAT website, and across your social media and other platforms as well. Ensuring this content is easy to navigate will also be essential.

3 APPLYING ONLINE

In a fast-moving world with current jobs taking up time and energy, candidates won't want to fill out lengthy application forms. The solution to this is simple - the online application. Around 70% of traffic to ETeach comes from mobile devices, so make sure your application form is mobile-optimised.

4 KEEP IN TOUCH

Consistent communication is very helpful in securing the candidates you want the most. Ensuring prospective teachers are kept well-informed throughout your recruitment process helps to nurture positive relationships before you make your decision. Maintaining a key contact for all communication is also beneficial.

5 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Provide an interview schedule in advance, including names of interviewers, dates and times. Outline any tasks you want the applicant to prepare for in advance. A post-interview email thanking them for attending and managing their expectations about your decision also goes a long way to building a positive candidate experience.

6 LET THEM SHINE

Make it clear the school encourages teachers to bring their interests into the classroom, such as experience in coding for example, and empowers them to bring the subject to life. On interview day, setting tasks is an effective way to assess your candidates' skills. Giving them space to showcase their abilities in computer science, and see how they would run a class, is hugely helpful when making those final decisions!



Make sure your job application form is mobile-optimised and easily accessible



Rhys Howells is managing director of recruitment solutions company ETeach.

HOW INCLUSIVE IS YOUR SCHOOL TO NEURODIVERSE STAFF?

Recruiting teachers with special needs such autism and ADHD can reap huge benefits for schools and pupils, says **Kate Sarginson**



term that has increasingly found its way into the conversation about inclusion is 'neurodiversity' – an umbrella term covering dyslexia, autism and other special needs.

Difference is to be expected, and diverse

ways of thinking and seeing the world should be valued and celebrated, rather than viewed as a problem.

An estimated one in ten people are neurodiverse and schools accept a range of SEND in children. It must follow, therefore, that a proportion of adults in schools are also neurodiverse, either through formal diagnosis or self-identification.

Do we welcome and accept neurodiverse members of staff in the same way we'd expect to treat children? It feels as if not as much attention is given to diversity in schools as a workplace, and while structures and attitudes are in place to meet the needs of pupils, can we say the same for staff?

The challenges encountered by neurodiverse staff

Schools work hard to make children feel accepted and cared about, and this should extend to staff too. Practitioners project an image of themselves and behave in ways deemed appropriate in a professional workplace. But trying to behave in a neurotypical way can put huge pressure on a teacher with autism or other needs, and many report feeling completely exhausted by what is known as masking – a process where identity is suppressed, either consciously or unconsciously. Neurodiverse teachers are at heightened risks of stress and burnout, caused by their (perceived) need to mask their true selves and feel unable to be open and honest to managers. This is something that needs to change.

Reading of documents, policies and emails, often within tight timeframes, can add pressure to staff with dyslexia. The volume and variety of tasks to complete by deadlines could be problematic for someone with ADHD or dyspraxia, while the social nuances and sensory stimuli of a bustling staffroom could represent more stress than relaxation for an autistic person.

Supportive line management

Senior leaders should cultivate relationships where staff feel comfortable being themselves and speaking about their needs without fear of judgement or reprisal. Neurodiverse adults should not feel ashamed or fearful; feelings that no child should experience on account of their additional needs. Heads need to be proactive about having discussions with all staff

so that well-being is safeguarded and opportunities to put support into place aren't lost. Having an open-door policy and building a culture of trust, will benefit all staff. A school which embraces inclusion as applicable to both children and adults will instil confidence in those with a neurodiversity to be themselves, and share any struggles they are experiencing.

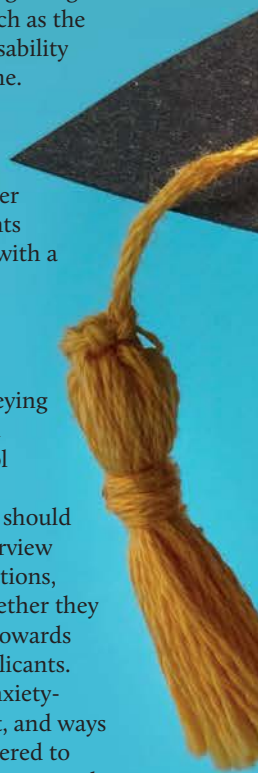
Once their needs are disclosed, neurodiverse staff have an entitlement to support, and failure to make reasonable adjustments could constitute discrimination. Alongside an open minded and supportive ethos, often simple to facilitate practical accommodations are all that is needed, implemented following discussion with the staff member. It is crucial to get to know employees on an individual basis, to avoid blanket approaches based on assumptions about what a diagnosis means, or how difficulties manifest.

Recruitment procedures

How far can schools actively seek diversity within their teams? If a school is publicly disability friendly then it will naturally be a more attractive workplace for candidates with neurodiversity. As neurodiversity is a term which applies to disability, it is a protected characteristic, and often application forms have a question relating to disability in order to ensure any additional accommodations are made should they be shortlisted.

However, it remains an individual's prerogative whether or not to choose to disclose their neurodiversity. Schools should revisit their job advertisements and application information packs to make the importance of inclusion for all explicit as well as directly stating how valuable neurodiverse staff are in education. Schools could consider achieving recognised accreditation, such as the government's Disability Confident Scheme. Taking steps to consider the language used will attract a wider range of applicants and make those with a neurodiversity more inclined to disclose, and appeal to those without by conveying a welcoming and supportive school culture.

School leaders should evaluate the interview process and questions, and consider whether they could be biased towards neurotypical applicants. Interviews are anxiety-inducing to most, and ways should be considered to minimise that. For example, someone with ADHD might speak more quickly when giving a presentation or find it difficult to remain on point when being interviewed. Presenting an autistic candidate with a hypothetical situation could



Empathy is strengthened when staff convey, through their teaching strategies and manner, similar challenges to the children they teach

be less useful than asking questions that draw from their own experience. A candidate with dyslexia might need longer time to read and process information in an unseen activity. Meanwhile, an interviewee with dyspraxia might be more productive if provided with a laptop to complete a written task. Looking through an inclusive lens at the mechanics of recruitment and making changes to minimise potential barriers to neurodiverse candidates, will allow them to shine.

Benefits of neurodiverse teachers

Leaders should consider the numerous strengths that can exist alongside, and indeed outweigh the challenges of, neurodiversity. People with dyslexia are often creative, visual processors who see issues holistically. Resilience and empathy can be features of those with dyspraxia. The hyperfocus associated with having ADHD and the special interests of autistic people can be a huge advantage where staff have responsibility for an area in which they have a strong interest. Leaders who foster positive inclusive attitudes will also facilitate strategic planning that utilises the particular talents of each member of staff.

Children need a variety of role models, and those who have SEND could respond positively to a teacher who is open

about their own diagnosis, strengths and needs, in a school where inclusion is not just applied to children.

Teachers aim to connect with their classes, and empathy is strengthened further when staff convey through their teaching strategies and manner, similar challenges to the children they teach. They can draw upon their own experiences and insight in ways that neurotypical teachers can't. Children feel seen and understood, and could be inspired to become teachers themselves.

The neurodiverse educators' community

It may appear that there is much to consider here and managing all of these eventualities, expectations and needs can feel daunting, but there are a number of publications and organisations

HOW TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

- Have a truly inclusive ethos, in which neurodiverse pupils and adults are welcomed equally.
- Ensure you have in place genuinely supportive line management systems where people feel comfortable disclosing their neurodiversity.
- Be prepared to provide extra time, accessible technology such as screen readers and voice activated dictation, which might be beneficial to teachers with dyslexia.
- Provide support and be flexible with prioritising and meeting deadlines if you have staff with ADHD or dyspraxia.
- Adjust your socialising expectations and consider providing a quiet space as an alternative to the staffroom for an autistic member of staff to decompress when needed.
- Find out more about the 3 levels of commitment to the Disability Confident Employers scheme at <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

you can turn to for further information:

- The Autistic School Staff Project has published 'Amazing Autistic Teachers – how to learn from them'.
- 'Learning from Autistic teachers - How to Be a Neurodiversity-Inclusive School (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021)
- <https://www.neuroteachers.com> offers advice and guidance for both neurodiverse pupils and staff, from the perspective of neurodiverse teachers.
- There is also a Neurodivergent Teachers Network Facebook group. **HT**



Kate Sarginson is a Lecturer of Education, delivering ITT specialising in SEND and Inclusion. She is a former SENCO and Primary Deputy Head, with over two decades of experience in teaching and school leadership across specialist and mainstream settings.

ARE SCHOOL HIERARCHIES KILLING TEACHER CONFIDENCE?

A top-down approach to CPD is stifling teachers' ability to make changes in the classroom, writes **Matt Tiplin**

If we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve.'

So said the eminent educationalist, Dylan William, and I couldn't agree more. Anyone who works in a school knows that continuous professional development is essential for unleashing the full potential of both teachers and students. I have never come across a teacher who is not interested or invested in self-improvement.

The trouble is, implementing successful CPD can be problematic. And applying a hierarchical management structure to staff training is not always the solution.

Hierarchy as a management tool

Schools and MATs are, by their very nature, hierarchical organisations, led and managed by senior leaders. This structure is extremely effective for the day-to-day running of a school.

Clear lines of command and communication ensure the smooth operation of what is an incredibly complex machine. Every aspect of school life is defined by SLT, from budget allocation and data collection to recruitment and curriculum design.

In the vast majority of schools, deciding on and implementing CPD is no different. Those at the helm set the course and steer the ship, bringing everyone along behind them.

However, there is an assumption sometimes that those at the top of the hierarchy are always the most expert at staff development and should therefore create and

deliver the CPD framework.

This is not necessarily true. I know from my own experience in leadership that the teachers I oversaw were almost always far more expert in the classroom than me. And how did I discover this? Through taking the time to get to know them and having rich and fulfilling conversations about teaching and learning.

There are so many routes to leadership, that occupying the most senior roles doesn't necessarily equip leaders with the skills to direct effective CPD to those further down the hierarchy.

As a result, a hierarchical model of them and us can actually be counter-productive and end up stifling teachers' ability to direct and own their development.

Even the most well-intentioned processes can fall flat if those on the receiving end feel 'done to' by those further up the hierarchical chain.

Teaching under the microscope

There is no doubt that great teaching leads to great outcomes for students, which is why staff need every opportunity to develop their practice. However, one by-product of this continuous drive for improvement is intense scrutiny.

Teaching is already one of the most overly-scrutinised professions. Parents rightly want to know how schools are performing, so they can make informed choices. This is entirely understandable, but one unintended consequence is vastly increased scrutiny from external bodies like Ofsted, and a culture of comparison through league tables and statutory assessment results.



It's little wonder that staff feel overwhelmed and 'done to' by CPD processes. There's no such thing as perfection in teaching but many feel like they are never up to scratch and that the demands made of them are unattainable.

That's not to say we should shy away from driving up standards. However, if we don't get it right, we risk losing even more great teachers.

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The problem with a 'top-down' approach

The misplaced assumption by some is that we can apply the same approach to developing adults' knowledge and skills as we do with children. Classrooms are hierarchical by nature, with the teacher as subject matter expert, imparting knowledge to fill a perceived or identified knowledge deficit.

However, adults learn differently from children and traditional didactic methods can lead to disengagement.

A good example is the whole-school INSET day. Aside from the obligatory audience participation and mandatory role-play exercises, INSET days tend to be passive affairs where an in-house or external expert imparts their wisdom to an expectant audience.

The agenda is almost always decided on in response to past events or outcomes. If reading results are down, senior leaders may decide to address this on an INSET day at the start of the following term. This retrospective approach does little to address real-time practice and can overload teachers.

HOW TO TRANSFORM TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR ALL PUPILS

Trust your teachers:

All teachers are professionals and all teachers want to do the best job they can. Whilst it is often hard to relinquish control, the reality is, if you give ownership of development to individuals, and trust them to get on with it, you are much more likely to be rewarded with buy-in and engagement.

Clarify your expectations:

Effective CPD has to have lasting impact in the classroom, so make sure you set out the parameters and expectations with staff in advance. Agree a realistic timeframe and make sure there are channels for you to check in and reflect on progress in a collaborative manner.

Get to know your staff:

No matter what your position or title, get out of your office and talk to your staff. There can sometimes be a them and us dynamic between leaders and teachers that needs to be bridged. Take the time to find out what's working and what isn't. Use the outcomes of conversations to agree next steps.

Release the idea of perfection:

Teaching is not an exact science and often we place unrealistic expectations on staff. All this does is make them risk-averse for fear of getting it wrong. Foster a culture where mistakes are embraced, and where teachers can set themselves micro-goals that build incrementally towards overall improvement.

Then, there is the lesson observation – another traditional CPD favourite. Anyone who has ever been observed by a leader in their classroom will tell you that the overriding feeling leading up to these events is fear. You can almost taste the trepidation in classrooms, as senior leaders stride purposefully down the corridor, clipboards or iPads in hand.

It is virtually impossible to act naturally when someone else is in your classroom. Children sense it, teachers sense it and so do those observing. Most lesson observations are hardly an accurate reflection of true classroom practice.

And then comes the dreaded feedback. Even in schools where the culture is one of openness and trust, this process can make teachers feel incredibly vulnerable.

Handing over the reins

So, what's the alternative?

Lasting change relies on people having control over their own development, so we need to hand over the reins to teachers. When people feel they are in charge and have a

voice, they are far more likely to buy into, and effect change, in the long term.

A 'bottom-up' approach puts teachers front and centre and allows them the autonomy to decide areas for development themselves. These can be identified through a reflective practice, for example by videoing and reviewing their own lessons, so they can analyse their own qualities and consider potential steps towards improvement.

These reflections may only take a matter of minutes but will have lasting impact further down the line. By taking small but purposeful steps towards agreed goals within clearly set out parameters, teachers gain an increased sense of value and confidence.

By removing the barrier of hierarchy and fostering a culture of self-reflection, we stand the best chance of retaining excellent teachers and maximising outcomes for all children. **HT**



Matt Tiplin is vice president of ONVU Learning, and is a former senior leader in a MAT and an Ofsted inspector.



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Hurricane Productions has been bringing the wonder of theatre into primary schools for the past 30 years. It brings vibrant scenery, costumes and music into your school at an affordable price. All the company's young actors come from the top drama schools and are DBS checked. It can adapt to any size venue – the scenery is approximately 6m wide and can be easily taken down between shows. The running time of shows is one hour and 20 minutes, inclusive of optional interval. For further information call: 0800 731 2677 or email: office@touringthetheatre.com



2 KITES FOR SCHOOL COMPETITION

Kites for Schools has designed a new eco-friendly kite kit featuring an outline of King Charles's Cypher, for children to colour in, as part of making their own kite. Every British King or Queen chooses a design called a Cypher, that appears on state documents, and is used by Government departments such as Royal Mail. It will also appear on military uniforms. Over time, Queen Elizabeth's Cypher will be replaced by the new one chosen by King Charles III when uniforms are replaced.

There is a competition to colour in the King's Cypher, and every child wins one of 10 stickers after they make their kite.



4 LIGHTING SOLUTIONS

For over 50-years, Urbis Schreder has been an integral part of the UK's exterior and interior lighting solutions. From classrooms to sports field, car park and campus, the company is fully focused on delivering a return on your investment, releasing vital budgets for other priorities.

Urbis Schreder can help clients save money, whilst reducing their maintenance and energy costs and supporting the drive to net zero. Visit its new Workspace Solutions page to find out how it can help you: schreder.com.



3 THE SCHOOLS & ACADEMIES SHOW

The SAAS is the UK's leading education policy event, bringing together thousands of school leaders to connect, spark new ideas and discuss the biggest challenges currently facing the education community. The event attracts some of the sector's most decorated and influential speakers to share their

knowledge and expertise. Our goal is to ensure we support schools, academies and MATs to overcome some of the most pressing challenges, and continue to provide practical resources to ensure efficiency is at the forefront of each operation. Find out more here: <https://hubs.la/Q01zKjZQ0>



5 HIRING TEACHERS MADE SIMPLE

Find the right primary teachers for your school, without the stress. Teach First recruits diverse, talented candidates to teach in the schools that need them most. Its rigorous selection process and expert, research-led Training Programme – rated ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted – means you’ll get the highest quality trainees, ready to hit the ground running.

Teach First’s new primary programme aligns closely to school needs, giving teachers the tools to think creatively. It will work with you, supporting your school and trainees at every stage. This includes a mentor within your school, professional coaching, expert academic guidance from a leading university and wraparound support. Because when your teachers thrive, so do your pupils. Visit teachfirst.org.uk/teacher-recruitment



7 INSPIRATION MADE EASY, SCHOOL TRIPS MADE SIMPLE

Expanding both learning experiences for your students and career opportunities for your teachers is seamless with Travelbound.

Trusted for over 30 years, Travelbound deliver high-quality educational tours accredited by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, Federation of Tour Operators, and School Travel Forum.

Whether your staff includes teachers taking on their first trip or seasoned Group Leaders,

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Providing subject-specific itineraries, single and multi-centre tours, plus cross-curricular experiences to increase students’ opportunities, rely on Travelbound’s expertise for an unforgettable school trip abroad. Visit travelbound.co.uk

6

PERSONALISED LEARNING

Meet DoodleLearning, the suite of award-winning digital work programmes revolutionising the way children learn!

Covering the core topic areas of maths and English, our four apps create every child a personalised work programme tailored to their needs.

By continually adapting to each learner’s level, Doodle targets tricky topics and consolidates their knowledge, helping to boost their confidence and ability. Plus, it’s fully curriculum-aligned, making it perfect for intervention, homework, pre-teaching or consolidation.



8 LANGUAGE SHOULDN’T BE A BARRIER

That is the mission of FlashAcademy, the UK’s No.1 EAL platform for schools.

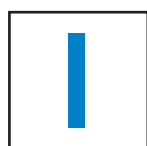
Used by over 900 schools and 50,000 pupils, FlashAcademy is an award-winning learning platform and digital assessment tool designed to support pupils who speak any one of 48 first languages – including Dari, Ukrainian, and Arabic – to speak English.

Over 45% of pupils learning with FlashAcademy progress by one or more proficiency grades over a 12-month period, compared with the national average of 18%. To find out more, visit flashacademy.com



“Participants unlocked long-forgotten talents”

An intergenerational approach to good mental health at Burley Oaks primary created new friendships and lessened feelings of loneliness in the community



n the summer of 2022, Burley Oaks Primary School retained its ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted rating with the report stating: ‘The rich and ambitious curriculum ensures that pupils’ emotional wellbeing is developed exceptionally well alongside

their excellent academic achievement.’

This quote, above all else, was the one that most delighted our staff. Since our last inspection, we have worked incredibly hard to foster a school community that understands and supports mental health through an intergenerational approach.

Tackling the stigma of mental health

When we began our mental health and wellbeing journey, our priority was to create an environment where children and parents felt they could talk about their own mental health and wellbeing. Crucially, we also wanted to recognise that our community stretches further than just our key stakeholders, and that we could play an important role beyond our school gates. This would not be easily achieved, but we could do more to tackle stigma and truly educate the next generation about good mental health. Discussing our own mental health is woven into the fabric of our community and we believe our mental health offer is successful because it spans three generations.

The first generation – children

We have been proactive in investing in staff training and interventions to promote good mental health. Our wellbeing ambassadors, Leaders at Lunch and peer mentors ensure a strong sense of pupil voice as well as providing students with new relationships, opportunities to connect and support during difficult moments.

Our bespoke provision includes peer mentoring, ‘drawing and talking’ and WellMe groups that address anxiety, self-esteem and emotions. Together these have laid the foundations on which our approach to removing the stigma surrounding mental health has been built. Our children speak confidently about what it means to have

good mental health – as one Year 6 pupil put it, “Talking about mental health doesn’t mean you have a problem. It means you can deal with everyday life, make friends and learn. Oh, and it helps you be resilient. That’s a big one.”

This provision, however, does not capture the essence of our intergenerational approach. Parental engagement and community outreach were key.

The second generation – parents

There are significant generational differences in both the approach to and the stigma surrounding mental wellbeing. Although good mental health provision is essential to any school offer, this is rendered pointless if parents do not

have the same values and vision to reinforce this learning at home.

To engage parents, the key to success was regular updates in multiple formats to normalise these discussions. Initially, when parents heard their children were undertaking wellbeing interventions, they assumed we were saying their child had a problem. It was hard to overcome this instinctive defensiveness. The only way to do so was to talk about it openly, honestly and consistently. Information about our mental health curriculum, support and interventions and events designed to promote good mental wellbeing are shared via social

When parents heard their children were undertaking wellbeing interventions, they assumed we were saying they had a mental health problem



media, our website and half-termly newsletters. There are also specific sections on the children's end-of-year reports on mental health and wellbeing. This wealth of rich information has helped to develop parental perception that mental health is part and parcel of their child's life at Burley Oaks.

To supplement this, we run a Family Links programme (based on the nurturing programme), reaching over 150 families. The scheme gives them the understanding, skills and ability to lead emotionally healthy lives, build resilience, empathy and self-esteem and support positive relationships at home.

Due to the success of Family Links, our wellbeing coordinator subsequently worked closely with a community volunteer to secure a grant to roll out the programme into the wider community.

The third generation – the community

In our community, older generations would not commonly interact with primary



WHO WE ARE

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY?



Location:

Burley Oaks Primary School is a two-form entry primary school in the village of Burley in Wharfedale, near Ilkley. It is an area with low socio-economic disadvantage with below national figures for Pupil Premium and SEND children.



Our community:

We benefit from close relationships with local businesses, two churches and four nurseries. These are mutually beneficial and create wide ranging opportunities to nurture interests in sport, nature, music and languages. We regularly deliver community outreach, such as singing at the local nurseries and send cards to residents of the nursing home.



Our vision:

Children's learning experiences at Burley Oaks create proud, long-lasting memories. Pupils leave equipped for their next phase of education, and have learned that high aspirations and hard work can bring great reward and satisfaction. We want children to be excited by learning, and to develop a thirst for knowledge whilst understanding that, along the way, learning can be challenging. They acquire the softer, personal skills to be happy, creative, resilient and purposeful citizens who are empowered to grasp future possibilities and are passionate about exploring further subjects and interests.

vulnerable local residents, who visited school for mince pies, carols and Christmas-themed crafts and games.

Watching the children interact with people who had a physical disability, learning difficulty or were living with dementia affirmed our beliefs in a project like this; we were able to see first-hand the power of someone sharing their story, increasing their self-worth and ensuring they did not feel overlooked or forgotten.

Participants reported unlocking skills and talents they don't use anymore and one resident, who suffers with constant pain, forgot her discomfort for a while and remembered her days as a teacher. It was a "priceless experience", according to her daughter. The room was alive with laughter and joy, and afterwards the children were buzzing with excitement about new friends, skills or interesting stories they had heard. They could see the positive impact they had on our guests and how, in turn, this could positively impact on their own mental health.

Because of our intergenerational approach, the pupils understand the value of giving and connecting. Even more importantly, our wider community feels valued, respected and included by the younger generation.

In its simplest terms though, our top tip from day one, for staff and children alike, was talk, talk, talk! Talk openly, confidently and often about mental health. Share successes, learn from failures and build something with longevity to create a community where no one feels alone. [HT](#)



Emma Learmonth is SENDCo and senior mental health lead at Burley Oaks Primary School, Bradford.

school life. So, our aim was to break down barriers, create new relationships and support the vulnerable members of our local population.

Following Covid, our pupils were eager to tackle loneliness and understood that making new connections and developing relationships, as well as being generous to others (in this instance with your time), could support their own wellbeing and that of others.

Working closely with our local community group, Love Burley, we undertook a series of events that became the most rewarding and heart-warming elements of our intergenerational project. Over the last academic year, for example, we have hosted a conker tournament and visited drop-in sessions for board games. Most recently, our Christmas Bonanza included 20

PSHE →

Cloud9UK



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Make sure your pupils grow into happy, responsible humans with this whole-school online programme

AT A GLANCE

- A whole-school programme focused on social-emotional skills and values
- Supports self-regulation through character exploration
- Develops self-confident, cooperative children, capable of making responsible decisions
- Literacy-based activities contribute to positive growth in language acquisition
- Supported by online resources

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Good education is good character education, and each child has a right to this kind of development. Cloud9UK is a great place to start this process.

Cloud9UK understands that positive character development empowers children and it is liberating. The company's mission is to 'provide all children with the knowledge, strategies, and the tools they need to adopt positive character strengths and wellness habits throughout life'.

To resource this mission, it offers a Primary Solutions product consisting of engaging literacy activities that centre around 50 character-strength development traits.

It provides schools with a programme and platform to teach character education and provides the rationale, language and tools to use for empowering virtues and developing these attributes elsewhere in and out of school.

These core moral, civic, performance and intellectual virtues stretch from acceptance, citizenship and commitment to tolerance, unity and wisdom, and have been specifically selected to develop specific dispositions, inform motivation and guide behaviour.

They have been cleverly constructed using animal characters to help children make conscious decisions about their thoughts, actions and deeds. Every character strength is matched to an animal with a story set in a different country around the world.

A robust e-platform provides you with a wealthy collection of highly flexible resources to furnish your teaching of a particular character strength. It's easy to use, and you can select from video clips, an animated book and curriculum, scenarios, intervention tools,

interactive teacher tools, digital games, printable resources, tools for the classroom, lesson plans, parent resources, academic activities, printable posters and more.

You can also access a number of assessments and quizzes relating to each character strength, including self-awareness, self-management and social awareness.

Cloud9UK recognises that children are a work in progress. Taken as a whole, these excellent resources help them to learn the meanings of key virtues and identify appropriate practices in which to apply them in their lives, respecting themselves and being of service to others.

Packed full of engaging activities and texts for pupils to explore and enjoy, the Cloud9UK resources are suitable for pupils from EYFS through to KS4. They develop practical wisdom and the capacity to choose intelligently between alternatives.

The resources will enable pupils to live well in a world worth living in because they teach the traits that sustain a well-rounded life and a thriving society.

Every child should leave the school at the end of the day feeling better about themselves than when they came to school in the morning. They should feel enabled, empowered and well-equipped to respond to the world around them. Through Cloud9UK, children will become more understanding of others because they will understand themselves more.

The most fundamental aspect to any character education programme is the development of virtue literacy skills, and this intelligent and balanced platform advances these with flair and self-confidence.

the headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ Helps children build an awareness of others, increase relationship skills, and make responsible decisions
- ✓ Empowers pupils to increase their own self-awareness and self-management skills
- ✓ Dynamically supports reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills
- ✓ Promotes the development of 21st-century strengths
- ✓ Cultivates critical thinking and positive personal responses
- ✓ Can help improve pupil behaviour, attitude and achievement

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for values-driven resources that aim to develop confident and compassionate pupils, who are effective contributors to society, successful learners, and responsible citizens who are happy human beings.

For further information see cloud9worlduk.com, email info@cloud9worlduk.com or follow on Twitter @Cloud9UK_

SAFEGUARDING MyConcern

Stay on top of your safeguarding obligations and ensure concerns are promptly addressed with this user-friendly reporting system



AT A GLANCE

- Bespoke safeguarding software for creating customised reports
- Automated chronologies for identifying trends
- Allows for easier inter-agency information sharing
- Up-to-date advice and guidance resources, including templates

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



Child protection is a key priority for all schools but one that's become increasingly complicated to manage, as the safeguarding risks children are potentially vulnerable to have grown over time.

Children spend around 7,800 hours in the care of teachers and other staff. The scale of this responsibility is enormous, and its challenges are complex. Staff are regularly informed that if they see something, they should say something and report it – but how? Schools need to ensure they have robust data and reporting mechanisms in place, so that effective action can be initiated in accordance with existing policies and staff can ensure procedures are being followed, while enabling different agencies to work together.

That's why I unreservedly recommend MyConcern – a Queen's Award-winning secure digital platform created by former police officers, designed to enable staff to easily record, report and manage all safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral concerns.

The software is brilliantly configured to provide all the expertise school staff will need in one place. As soon as a concern is raised, it's assigned its own unique reference number and a Designated Liaison Person is alerted, thus kick-starting the process of triaging.

Concerns can be grouped under different categories and case owners easily assigned. Users then have the option to view an automated chronology, complete with filtering, redaction and export functions. Separate files can be easily attached to

concerns, with all documents securely stored. A main 'Concerns' dashboard will clearly display any filed, open and new concerns, while a 'Pupil Profiles' function can be made to show aggregated information across all concerns, including body maps, flags and level of need.

MyConcern can provide safeguarding leads with the confidence that they're meeting all statutory, legal and moral obligations. Its reporting tools are second to none, giving you detailed data analysis of the highest order, and the option to present all this data via easy to digest summaries, to help identify trends and deploy resources more effectively.

Crucially, MyConcern will help schools build effective, well-informed safeguarding teams that can respond rapidly when a child appears to be at risk. Accountability processes are baked in, with the platform keeping a thorough audit trail of who, when and what has been involved in any given concern.

Information sharing with external partners is therefore made more accurate, reliable and better able to withstand later scrutiny, allowing you to minimise your own risks and ensure compliance. Even better, any concerns you have can be securely recorded and case managed on any internet-enabled device, either through a web browser or via the dedicated MyConcern mobile app.

The welfare and wellbeing of children is everyone's business. MyConcern can be a powerful ally to you in helping record and manage essential evidence as part of your whole-school safeguarding procedures.

the
headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ An ultra-secure platform for recording and addressing safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Robust and sophisticated reporting tools
- ✓ Smartly designed, with an intuitive and easy-to-use interface accessible via multiple devices
- ✓ Excellent value for money
- ✓ An innovative and outstanding piece of safeguarding infrastructure

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to easily record and manage any safeguarding concerns, while saving time and facilitating early intervention. This is a powerful system that can materially improve your safeguarding provision.

For more information, visit thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcerndemo

MY NEW APP WILL BE A MUST FOR EVERY HEADTEACHER

Problem parents? **Colin Dowland** has had an idea....

I

'm developing a new app for my phone. It's called *Parent-O-Matic* and in true *Dragon's Den* style, I need a software developer to help me with the technology and a donor to fund it. It will be a must-have for every headteacher.

I got the idea from an app I downloaded recently called Chirp-O-Matic, which identifies birds from their calls. You press a button, record the sound and it identifies the species, including its Latin name and a brief description - a bit like Shazam, but with feathers. On recent dog walks, I identified a mistle thrush (*turdus vicivorus*), and a flamingo (*phoenicopterus roseus*), although I think I was in a 3G blackspot that day.

It got me thinking about how useful this might be at school. I could point my phone at new parents and identify what we have in store for the next seven years. These are the types we need to input:

The Cotton Wool Parent (*Worrypottium helicopterae*)

This family will force their offspring to wear several coats, scarves and a bobble hat, even in summer. The child will always carry antibacterial wipes and usually be on antibiotics. Copious mid-morning snacks will be provided to prevent 'hangriness.' These will be organic, and carried in a lunchbox made of recycled sandals.

Prone to: Daily emails to school, arranging medical appointments during lessons and making diagnoses of complex learning needs and allergies using Google.

Most likely to say: *'I've given her some Calpol, just in case.'*

The Pushy Parent (*Overtutorus horribilis*)

They will forever ask for additional reading books and more advanced spellings, as well as extra homework which, when handed in, will be a worthy of inclusion in a *Tate Gallery* exhibition. Their offspring will look pale, pasty and exhausted due to lack of exposure to natural sunlight. They will leave school promptly at home time to shoot off to daily private tutors and carry a map of selective secondary schools.

Prone to: Being over-critical of their child, lobbying for a starring role in the end of year production and moving into a better catchment area.

Most likely to say: *'I know he's only six, but we're hoping for Oxbridge.'*

The Laid-Back Parent (*Virtualli horizontalis*)

Will regularly arrive late for school, their offspring unkempt, with only a nod to the official school uniform and wearing odd shoes. The child will show flare for arts subjects, and become obsessed with imaginary friends. If homework is handed in at all, it will look messy, almost as if their child had completed it alone. Permission slips for trips will need chasing, they will often collect late from school without explanation and will send their child in loaded with peanut-based snacks.

Prone to: Dropping their child at school on INSET Days and booking a holiday during term time as a genuine accident.

Most likely to say: *'Just as long as they are happy.'*

The Tricky Parent (*Latigious maximus*)

This one will complain about absolutely everything and will set up *WhatsApp* groups to air their views of the school, the staff and all the children except their own. They believe that their child is gifted, unfailingly honest and a perfect angel, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Although living locally, they will arrive at school in a huge 4x4, blocking neighbouring driveways and doing elaborate seven-point turns outside school at home time, while others are trying to cross the road.

Prone to: Owing dinner money, questionable political views and wearing pyjamas at drop off.

Most likely to say: *'I'm going to Ofsted about this.'*

The Ideal Parent (*Perfectus perfectus*)

Grounded, trusting and rare, this parent is an endangered species. Fully supportive and positive, they will have high, but realistic expectations of their child, back you up when needed, and be understanding when sometimes you get things wrong. These parents must be protected and nurtured, always.

Prone to: Sending in cakes for the staffroom, unprompted.

Most likely to say: *'Thanks for everything you are doing for my child.'* **HT**



Colin Dowland is a primary headteacher in North London. He tweets as @colindowland

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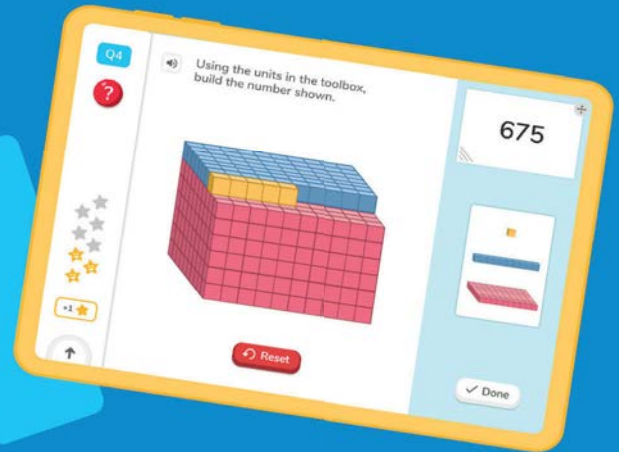


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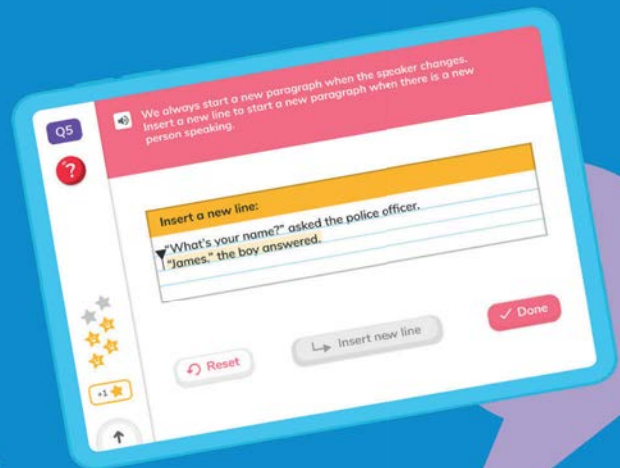
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